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Hope in Action

Hope in Action

The Church's Task in the World

by HANS J. MARGULL

translated by EUGENE PETERS



MUHLENBERG PRESS

PHILADELPHIA

This book is a translation of an unpublished adaptation by the author of his *Theologie der missionarischen Verkündigung: Versuch über das Problem der Evangelisation in der oekumenischen Diskussion*, published by the Evangelisches Verlagswerk in Stuttgart, Germany, 1959.

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*To the memory
of my respected teacher
Professor Walter Freytag,
Chairman of the Division of Studies of the
World Council of Churches,
Vice-President of the
International Missionary Council
October 24, 1959*

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Foreword

This book has been written with the intention of mastering the difficult problem of evangelism theologically. Fortunately we already possess a series of noteworthy studies on the practical execution of this task, which at present is probably the most important one in the church. It seems, though, that methodological guides do not help a great deal, while much remains to be done. Moreover, we dare not proceed as if it were merely a matter of undertaking evangelism, i.e., as if evangelism were simply a matter of obedience. I know of a great many highly respectable people whose obedience I deeply admire but who nevertheless have a number of grave reservations about evangelism. Their reservations, which are strictly of a theological nature, are summarized in the question put to the evangelists: "Do you really know what you are doing?" And with that the theologians begin to fret about evangelism in their own way, i.e., in a necessary, theological manner.

In May, 1959, a conference was organized by the Central Department of Evangelism of the National Council of Churches to review an ecumenical study of evangelism. In the report of this conference I read the following sentences: "Methods are shaped by theology. A systematic statement of a theology of evangelism is needed." This point is central. Our methods are always dependent on our theology; but our theology, especially our theology of evangelism, appears largely to be very fragmentary. It does not suffice to have some sort of scheme on hand, even if saturated with a profusion of biblical passages. Theology is not a scheme. It is an exciting process of thinking which originates in a careful and genuinely attentive reading of the Scriptures. Because reflection on the Word of God is possible only if done hum-

bly, this process of thinking must take place systematically. Only the systematic thinker is a humble thinker.

This book is an attempt to consider systematically the questions connected with evangelism. It is only an attempt, but perhaps even an attempt will aid our progress. At most we are, under God, only moving towards the goal. We never attain it.

When I began to write this book, I discovered that a biblical, and therefore a good theological answer to the difficult question of evangelism is always deficient unless God's dealings with the entire world are kept in mind. Ordinarily Germans think about evangelism only insofar as German problems are concerned. The same seems to apply respectively to Americans and Englishmen. But does not God act on every continent and among all nations? Must not the whole world be kept in mind? With this question before me, I was led to the material accumulated in the ecumenical discussion on the problem of evangelism. The wealth of this material so overwhelmed me that I abandoned my own notes and gave myself to the task of organizing and interpreting material which, at least in part, was quite diffused and difficult of access. But the material speaks clearly when set in the right context. The result is a book that intends simply to report systematically what a great number of evangelists, churchmen, and theologians in the ecumenical discussion have written and said about the question of evangelism. I regard not my book, but rather the ecumenical material itself, as the most important contribution to the contemporary evangelical task of the church.

In the ecumenical discussion the theological question has always been the focal point. For a long time work has been directed toward a theology of evangelism. A statement of an English conference on evangelism as long ago as 1946 has become the theme in the work of the World Council of Churches: "It is a disastrous mistake to suppose that what is

chiefly wanted for more successful evangelism is improvements in methods and the use of new techniques. It is the whole classical exposition of the Gospel that needs to be re-examined."

Similarly, it has been indubitably accepted in the ecumenical discussion that evangelism can be examined theologically only when missions and evangelism are viewed in connection with one another and when the problems of evangelism are clarified with reference to those of missions. If this notion appears obvious, consider its consequences! Of course, missions can be said to consist of the propagation of the churches. But is this biblical? If I read the Bible correctly, missions are the promise of God for the time at the end of the world. The Old Testament speaks clearly on this (e.g., Isa. 2:1-4). Jesus himself restrained his disciples from going to the Gentiles (e.g., Matt. 10:5). Neither exegetically nor theologically is this fact to be explained away. The time of the end had not yet come. Not until the death of Jesus, not until his resurrection and ascension, not until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was promised for the end of history are the disciples to go to the Gentiles. Only then will the time be the right time, the promised time. Missions, then, occur in a time which is not just any time and which is not like the time before Christ. If evangelism is regarded from the viewpoint of missions, then the old conception of it must be revised. Consequently evangelism is not merely the endeavor of the church to save or to convert as many as possible. Evangelism can be nothing but simple, loyal, patient, obedient participation in the consummation of the plan which God has for the world and which he effects himself. What God has promised, he creates himself. Accordingly, missions are God's affair. Missions are always God's missions — and we are his servants. The same holds for evangelism. Evangelism is God's affair. It is always God's evangelism and we are his obedient servants. Servants possess nothing of themselves;

they can only ask what the Lord would have them do. And this is always a question for prayerful theology.

Perhaps these concise sentences will clarify the theme of the book. Perhaps they will enable the reader to understand why this book speaks so much of hope. In the face of the promise of God, man can only stand in hope.

It is difficult to express this thought in a genuinely understandable manner. A series of concepts are necessary which are themselves contested even among theologians. The book is therefore provided with a glossary, from which the reader may learn what the author means, e.g., by "eschatology." Still, I must ask patience if some concepts strike the American reader (or those reading English) as too continental.

Likewise it will soon be noticed that the author is German. In the analysis of the situation in which we find ourselves, naturally the one of concern to us in Europe was of primary importance for me. But perhaps it is precisely the European situation that is significant for American readers, even if it conforms only slightly to their own situation, differing somewhat as it does from the European. Though the European situation may prompt consideration of the American, it is still important to take notice of the European situation of itself. It is true that I previously stated we cannot rightly reflect upon the problems of evangelism unless we keep the whole world in mind. But there is another consideration. In Europe — and, above all, thirty miles from the Iron Curtain — the total reality of our contemporary world and the full picture of our churches are manifested! When we speak of evangelism, we think of people living in the shadow of our churches. Could it be that God's concern extends to other people, to whom the Gospel is to be witnessed? Are such people perhaps the whole multitude of those men who, deeply disillusioned with our churches, are looking for their own paths in the construction of a Communist world? When we speak of evangelism, could it be that we begin with as-

sumptions about the quality of our churches, which the others are to join? Could it be that God is calling our churches into question? These questions accord with the European situation, or rather, I should say, with the German situation, which, with respect to the church, is characterized by the mutual encounter of East and West within the church. This situation has consequences for the church throughout the world.

This book is dedicated to Dr. Walter Freytag. Whoever knew him will realize how greatly this book is indebted to his theological thought. I owe him my profound gratitude.

I am grateful to my — I may say — fatherly friend, Bishop Stephen C. Neill, for many helpful suggestions, but especially for the encouragement that he repeatedly gave me just by his presence. I ask his indulgence, however, in that I took but little heed, that I could take but little heed, of his constant admonition not to deal with eschatology in too general and especially in too “continental” a manner. I had no other choice if I wanted to be clear on what demands primary consideration with regard to this question or similar ones.

Above all, I am grateful to colleagues in the ecumenical discussion who have taught me what I have written. I have, therefore, of necessity cited them copiously. At the same time I must also offer them my apologies on two scores. I am not certain whether I always detected their meaning; and furthermore, I was able to utilize only a fraction of their contributions. Although this book actually proceeds in the same manner as the ecumenical discussion, it will surprise some people that a theology of evangelism begins the way this one does. In this book the long initial chapter deals with the hope in Jesus Christ, and every problem is viewed with reference to that hope.

I should like to mention my heartfelt thanks, even if ten years later, to my teachers and fellow-students at the Biblical

Seminary in New York. They aroused my interest in the question of evangelism. Similar thanks, likewise rather tardy, are due to my friends in the German Student Christian Movement and in the World Student Christian Federation. On the question of evangelism they gave me no rest.

Furthermore I ask the forgiveness of those men involved in evangelism who are not only courageous but also theologically responsible. I have always regarded myself as striving toward the same goal as they; and that makes me especially critical. My task here is not to take account of their efforts in detail. But, it seems incumbent upon me to arrive, partly with them and partly in opposition to them, at more consistent and even more exact thinking, to formulate even sharper questions, and to come to grips with the theological problems even more resolutely than ever before.

It may be said of this book that it is nothing more than an attempt and that many of its statements are too one-sided and brief. But something else must be added. In a mere sketch of the problem not even approximately all the questions pertinent to the matter under consideration can be so much as mentioned, while other questions are not treated in the necessary detail. The effort to grasp evangelism in a strictly christological aspect eschatologically would necessarily lead to a trinitarian foundation. In the attempt to present the problem of the church in connection with the questions raised here, a rather extensive digression would have to be adduced concerning the theological position of church and non-church, as well as a more detailed statement of the tension between church and missions, not to mention other questions. Beyond the brief remarks on the problem of baptism, the question of baptism and knowledge would require much more radical inquiry. A series of practical questions on the strengthening of congregations does not receive enough attention. Basic problems of hermeneutics, although important in principle, receive no mention at all. Under-

standably, a great deal of work remains which is here barely begun and ventured only within the confines of given capabilities. It is an attempt to open a pathway, nothing more.

One other thing remains to be mentioned concerning the structure of the book. The book is rooted in the question of evangelism in accordance with the course and results of the ecumenical discussion. The results are the main concern but will not be even approximately understood unless the course of the discussion is known. It is a dynamic process of theological work undertaken by many people in many places and on many occasions. The course and results of the discussion, though, will remain unconnected so long as the elements are not considered through which the conversations on evangelism touch upon other subjects of the ecumenical discussion. As foci of the whole problem, therefore, these elements mark the point at which we shall begin. Then the course of the discussion must be delineated, and, finally, the results must be examined. I have elsewhere described this method in greater detail.¹

¹ H. J. Margull, "Oekumenische Diskussion. Erwägungen zu ihrer wissenschaftlichen Erarbeitung," *Basileia. Walter Freytag zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds., J. Hermelink and H. J. Margull (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1959), pp. 409-14.

Translator's Preface

The following translation is based on a revised but unpublished German text. The author has made a number of minor changes, eliminated many footnotes, and provided a new Foreword and a Glossary for the English edition of his book. Whenever possible, English editions of the works referred to in the footnotes have been substituted for the original German references. Other than these factual matters, one other point needs to be stressed. The Foreword and especially the Glossary do not consist of the usual innocuous amenities, but form an essential part of the book. The reader is urged to give them his careful attention.

Dr. Eberhard A. Amelung deserves much more than mention in this preface. I undertook the translation only at his urging and received invaluable assistance from him. Whatever merits the translation may possess are due in no small measure to his efforts. Whatever flaws remain are solely my responsibility.

EUGENE PETERS

Glossary

ESCHATOLOGY and ESCHATOLOGICAL are derived from the Greek word, *eschaton*, "the last thing." In dogmatics "eschatology" is called "the doctrine of the last things," and "eschatological" means "pertaining to last things." What is to be understood by the "last things" is a subject of controversy in theology. One broad stream of theological thought understands the "last things" to refer to death as the last thing. From this viewpoint "the last thing" is rightly regarded as man's direct encounter with God. Generally, though, the function of God as judge at death is so restricted to the individual by this notion of the "last things" that the concept of eschatology is actually regarded as referring only to the death of the individual, i.e., to the fate of his soul. In contrast, another, more comprehensive understanding of the "last things" has resulted from recent theology and especially from work in the New Testament. In this view eschatology is a concept seeking to express the *complete* "last" dealings of God with humanity. With reference to Hebrews 1:2 and I Peter 1:20 ("in *these last days* he has spoken to us by a Son" . . . "He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the *end of the times*") and to the promises in the Old Testament (Micah 4:1 might be mentioned) this view conceives of the coming and work of Jesus Christ as having its own unique significance for the history of the world in indicating that the end of history has begun. In Jesus Christ God achieves his aim, i.e., the conclusion of his dealings with the world. Accordingly, whatever occurs in and with Christ belongs to the time of the end. The classical passage for this is Matthew 11:5. "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news

preached to them." In this passage the promises of the Old Testament for the end are regarded as fulfilled. This end has come in Christ (Luke 17:21), though to be sure only in that it has begun and is approaching fulfilment. This fulfilment will take place with the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory (I Cor. 1:7; I Thess. 1:3). By eschatology is meant the tension in which the kingdom of God stands as the promised lordship of Jesus Christ over all the world. The kingdom of God is already present together with the (hidden) advent of Christ, but at the same time it is not yet present together with the (manifest) Parousia of Christ. The stress of eschatology lies in its advertence to what is to come. In Jesus Christ God has dealt with the world, God is dealing with the world, and God *will* deal with the world. In this book the rather frequent and even rather brusque use of the word "eschatological" is intended to emphasize continuously that God has further dealings with the world, dealings which decisively lead to the Parousia of his Son. This will be an historical matter; it would be misinterpreted by the precipitate use of the word, "apocalyptic." Eschatology is therefore a doctrine of the active vigilance of the Christian. It is not merely a theory about the future.

EVANGELISM. This concept is also used in a specific sense. It is best understood by abandoning its popular meaning (a move which has long been necessary) and confining it as strictly as possible to the viewpoint indicated in the delineation of "Eschatology." "Evangelistic enterprises are programs of zealous ecclesiastical aggrandizement. On occasion they may be more than that, but when are they ever less?" (J. N. Hartt). If evangelism refers, not to what is, but to what is to be, then "expectant evangelism" constitutes the subject of discourse. "Expectant evangelism" is every proclamation which lives solely by the great deed of God in the cross, in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ — and by the

expectation of the great deed which God has promised. Proclamation counts on the *future* of Jesus Christ and exists only by virtue of his future. Under no circumstances is the word "evangelism" in this book to be taken to mean any sort of endeavor (even, of course, a covert one) to augment the churches. Evangelism as "expectant evangelism" is solely participation in the activity of God with a view to his great deed at the end. Precisely for that reason should all our evangelistic endeavors be planned concretely and, of course, no less actively.

CHURCH, CHURCHES. These terms are to be distinguished from one another, but not by adoption of the old distinction between the visible and invisible church. The church always has a form. Or rather, the church exists in different forms, i.e., in the churches. If criticism is exercised, it is directed toward the churches and is done so chiefly with the goal in mind that they may conceive of themselves as "eschatological reality" (W. A. Visser 't Hooft) — in other words, that the church may grow in them. For the church is the event of the time of the end. The church is the people gathered in Jesus Christ, the people whose Lord is Lord of the time of the end. For the sake of the church, or, more precisely, on account of its witness to the world, the world is preserved!

▲

PART ONE

The Hope—Message and Basis

“The ecumenical discussion is only possible where theology is seen eschatologically as *theologia viatorum*.”

W. Nicholls
Ecumenism and Catholicity, p. 62

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I

Importance of the Theme, "Christ—the Hope of the World," for the Ecumenical Discussion

The central theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954 was "Christ — The Hope of the World." This theme is as significant for the theological work and a self-understanding of the ecumenical movement as the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910) was for the emergence, growth, and organization of the movement itself.

THE CATEGORY OF THE ECUMENICAL

The importance of the theme of Evanston is twofold. First, it raised the question, in its biblical-theological elaboration of eschatology for the ecumenical discussion; and second, of "eschatological" it led to a new dimension in the understanding of the ecumenical.

The theological elaboration of this theme, which freed the terminal-historical — not apocalyptic! — component of biblical eschatology christologically in the ecumenical movement, burst abruptly upon the discussion. The characteristic outlook of the ecumenical movement before Evanston was indicated by H. P. van Dusen, then chairman of the Study Department Commission of the World Council of Churches, who declared (with some exaggeration) that among the participants in the meeting of the Central Committee at Toronto (1950), which formulated and adopted the main theme for Evanston, "not more than half a dozen had the slightest anticipation that the choice of this theme would plunge the World Council into the debates regarding eschatology . . .":

Probably what most members had in mind was that the theme would be developed along at least two lines: (1) a reasoned and tempered restatement of what Christians are entitled to hope for the future of human society; (2) a strong reaffirmation of the Christian assurance of eternal life. . . .¹

W. Freytag reports that he, aware of the primarily eschatological implications of the theme, namely, the inevitable question of God's final historical action in Jesus Christ, and of the hitherto prevalent theological self-understanding in the ecumenical discussion, expressed his admiration to the General Secretary of the World Council, W. A. Visser 't Hooft, for the courage he displayed in supporting this theme in the face of the great danger of a rupture in the ecumenical movement.² Fear of this rupture was later generally expressed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft took the risk. He regarded the theme, especially in connection with the terminal-historical question, as a "challenge" for the ecumenical discussion.

In concentrated form this "challenge" would probably consist in criticism of, or at least in a question addressed to the ecumenical discussion itself, whether it is not necessary to re-examine thoroughly its past and work and especially its theological point of departure with respect to its new or more sharply delineated viewpoint.

On the whole, that point of departure, which was common in the conception of the ecumenical in the past and still prevails today, consisted in the view that it is necessary both for the missionary organizations and for the churches to meet together and to co-operate. The basis of the necessity, which is the decisive theological point, was held to range from the matter of greater effectiveness in Christian action to the unity which is given in Jesus Christ and must therefore be

¹ H. P. van Dusen, "The Issues of Christian Hope," *The Christian Century*, LXX (1953), 1355.

² W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Faith and Order and the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches," *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, held at Lund, 1952*, ed. O. S. Tomkins (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1953), p. 131. Hereafter referred to as *Lund, 1952*.

realized by the churches. This point of departure is both vague and theologically inadequate. Its weakness was demonstrated in the crisis which confronted the ecumenical work of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund (1952) and which was recognized as such in the preparations for Evanston. At that point the very heart of past ecumenical discussion seemed in essence to be fruitless because to a great extent the discussion had overlooked the ecclesiological factors in the unification of the churches. Even in the christological factor of unity itself, the *eschatological* factors had been overlooked. Consequently, the church, on the whole, had to be conceived as a unit, though split into separate parts, each complete in itself. Attention was focused on the empirical existence of the (particular) churches and their traditions, and on the (vague) possibility that distinctions in faith and order might be mutually adjusted, while bearing in mind the essential elements that constitute the church as church.

As yet, the work of Evanston has had but slight effect among the churches which are members of the World Council. Awareness of this fact would make it plain that the deficiency of the point of departure described above cannot be emphasized persistently enough. As a result of this deficient point of departure, "ecumenical" comes to have no other meaning for the churches' activity than that they meet in a spirit of togetherness and co-operation. The greatest promise — if we may say so — of such meeting lies in the hope that the extent of division may be diminished by assembling and engaging in "ecumenical conversation" (which, after all, is not binding). Or, at most, in a few places unaffected by denominational complications, the division may even be overcome. If the results of the theological work at Evanston are properly understood, and if the implications of these results for the point of departure utilized in the self-understanding of the ecumenical movement are correctly interpreted, then a rele-

vant question emerges, which W. A. Visser 't Hooft appears also to have had in mind. The question is this: Must not the ecumenical movement, if it is to possess a biblically proper foundation, live — and does it not do so already (from the viewpoint of the history of salvation) — by an awareness and apprehension of the eschatological dealings of God in Jesus Christ with the whole world?

From this point of view that trivial misconception of the ecumenical movement might be eliminated which is still current in some quarters, i.e., that the ecumenical movement lives "by the grace" of the churches assenting to it. An understanding of the correct and prevalent conception of the unity of the church in its common Lord might also be assured. Such an understanding might not be so abbreviated as to make it appear that only a dogmatic proposition is at stake. On the contrary, the ecumenical might be held to be a matter of a living, dynamic expectation in hope. It might be maintained that the historical event of the revelation of the lordship of God in Jesus Christ, upon which the church is founded, effects the unity of the church with a view to the final manifestation of the lordship of God. If actualized eschatologically, the relevance of the given unity would be properly understood in a christological manner.³

The ecumenical course of the churches would then acquire and even express the eschatological character suitable to the churches as they exist together in Christ and participate in his historical movement towards the end of history. What is more, only this course would be an expression of the eschatological character of the churches. This is true for two reasons. First, the unified existence granted the churches can only be realized eschatologically. Second, the empirical weight of the churches, which constantly tend towards internal secularization, can be alleviated only if the churches undertake jointly

³ Cf. W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 404-12.

their task over against the world. In this way the churches actually become the church, so to speak.

An attempt to explicate what has been written above with reference to its practical consequences would suggest the somewhat tragic, because necessary, inflexibility of the churches. In historical expression this inflexibility acquires a significance of its own—a significance not to be underestimated—for the congregation gathering under the Word and for the theological understanding of the Word in its confessional setting. The churches' confession and constitution are constantly in danger of becoming absolutized in their fixed state. Every attempt to correct this leads to new fixation. This fact has become clear in the thirty years of the ecumenical movement on Faith and Order. Each church has remained to itself. The churches could not, so to speak, jump over their own shadows. With respect to the goal of history, historical configurations, of course, do not appear entirely without significance; but they do appear as *provisional*. If the churches become aware of this provisional element, their ecumenical course will lead them to freedom precisely through their self-surrender—through unification.⁴

If this interpretation is correct, then the theme of Evanston has indicated the direction for developing a new point of departure in the theological work and self-understanding of the ecumenical movement. Accordingly, the question arises whether the eschatological is not indeed the category of the ecumenical! It seems certain that this was in W. A. Visser 't Hooft's mind when he assured a temporizing and even anxious audience in Lund that "this theme has chosen us."⁵

⁴ The intentions of Minneapolis lay (after Evanston) in this direction. Cf. Vilmos Vajta, *Christus befreit und eint* ("Luthertum," Heft 20 [Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1957]).

⁵ For his theological presuppositions, cf. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ. An Interpretation of Recent European Theology* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1948). Note especially the sentences: "The Church lives by faith and not by sight. It is a Church of pilgrims who have not yet arrived at their destination" (p. 67). "The Churches can only be healed by learning to hope" (p. 24).

THE CENTER OF THE ECUMENICAL

The theological elaboration of the eschatological basis of missions constitutes the history of the theme of Evanston. In the preparations for the assembly of the International Missionary Council at Willingen (1952), certain broader points of departure were found for the first time. They disclosed the need to purify the motive for missions and to provide a solid foundation. The motive had to be purged of two elements: the dissemination of Christianity and the planting of churches, insofar as these were hidden self-assertion on the part of the churches. Missions, in their theological point of departure, had to be based solely on the hope in Jesus Christ and hopeful participation in his messianic work. Thus Evanston receives additional significance for the eschatological basis of missions. In the preparations for Evanston, the intense and deepening elaboration of biblical eschatology succeeded at the outset in clearing up the theological confusion prevailing at Willingen, in shattering the reserve of many of the participants at Willingen — in spite of the results achieved there — towards the terminal-historical elements in eschatology, and in effecting throughout the discussion a general recognition that missions and eschatology essentially belong together. If the motif, "The Christian world mission is Christ's, not ours," was able to mark the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Ghana (1957-58), then this is a seed sown at Willingen and brought to fruition at Evanston, a fruition which must also be understood in the sense of the results of Evanston. The report of Section II of Evanston begins with the words, "Jesus Christ is the Gospel we proclaim. He is also Himself the Evangelist."⁶ This sentence must be understood eschatologically. Evangelism is a christological datum; therefore, it is an eschatological act.

⁶ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (New York: Harper, 1955), pp. 98-108. Hereafter referred to as *The Evanston Report*.

All missions, everything genuinely missionary, and every trace of missions are bound to Christ eschatologically and are therefore based on the messianic gathering of his people out of all nations with a view to his future and his manifestation at the end of history. The category of the missionary is the eschatological!

If a biblically relevant consideration is sought for the interdependence of the ecumenical and the missionary, the argument that missions can be properly realized only in the unity of the churches can be vindicated within but one context: The eschatological character of the churches is bound to God's eschatological dealings with the world. This means that the churches are objectively taken into the missionary tension of God's way with the world and that this tension can only be expressed ecumenically because the churches' presence throughout the world make this a matter relevant to the entire world. It is clear, then, that missions as well as the eschatological-missionary existence of the church can be dealt with theologically only in an ecumenical manner. On the other hand, it follows that there cannot be a theological statement concerning the ecumenical without a concrete statement on the missionary.

This conclusion gives rise to the question whether, to be theologically adequate, the missionary does not have to move to the center of the ecumenical! This does not mean in the least that the question of the unity of the church and of the united action of the churches is bypassed or relativized in any way. On the contrary, it is precisely the historically primary, ecumenical question that would acquire full biblical transparency, were it to become actualized in a missionary framework. The mystery of the individual Christian's existence is that it is perceived only if the individual, by God's action upon him, is pressed to call others. This call involves penitence as an expression of the fact that one is grasped by God. The same applies to the churches.

The churches become aware of their eschatological existence and therefore of their ecumenical being only if they do not confine themselves to their own circle but rather transmit the eschatological Word, under which they come into being and by which they live, in the dynamic peculiar to it, i.e., in a missionary framework. This would introduce (as also in the organization of the ecumenical discussion) one of the most important of all the ecumenical insights, namely, that the unity of the church realized in Jesus Christ is delineated only in the joint witness to Jesus Christ which is given to the world—a witness which, begun in hope, lets hope grow. On this basis the discussion on evangelism is of central importance for the ecumenical discussion as a whole.

“EXPECTANT EVANGELISM”

In the final analysis, the theme of Evanston is important because an ecumenical conference used it to provide, for the first time, an eschatological basis for so-called evangelistic work in Europe, America, and Australia. This step was not only decisive but also daring in its theological consequences. There is in it on the one hand the possibility of liberating evangelism from its widespread pious individualism and from the danger current in many areas of suffocation through the churches' inclination toward institutionalization. On the other hand, this step has implications for work which would be genuinely missionary among the baptized, who cannot be the object of a “missionary” approach because they already belong to the gathered community of God. These two points are so fundamental for the elaboration of the discussion that they were already intimated in the Foreword. The present work aims at a searching examination of them.

The path to this eschatological basis was opened at the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam (1948). There the discussion on the question of evangelism began with the declaration that theologically evangelism

cannot be separated from missions. The declaration was based on ecumenical principles fundamental for the (over-all missionary) task of the churches. Subsequently, with good reason, it was pointed out that evangelism was now confronted by a radically different picture, the collapse of the *Corpus Christianum*. The theological relevance, though, of the Amsterdam decision first became apparent through the work at Evanston and eventually led to the question: What is actually *expected* in the evangelistic work of the church? J. C. Hoekendijk, whose papers played a decisive role at this point, had been raising this question from the very beginning. An attempted paraphrase of the question would take the following form: Is the primary objective—and at this point extreme theological alertness is called for—to win back those alienated from the church or even to recover lost ecclesiastical ground, mindful of previous church membership and of the power of the church to imprint itself upon a society? Rather, is not the primary objective—which many churches purpose in principle but repeatedly bury beneath false presuppositions—to proclaim the gospel with a view to the day of God, with a view to the day on which his people will be gathered? Is it not, then, actually a matter of *gathering anew*, i.e., of genuine evangelism?

It is necessary to state that the question growing out of the Report of Section II was not so seriously pursued in the discussion on the evangelistic problem after Evanston as the position of Evanston formulated in the Report would lead one to expect. The discussion probably failed on this score because, aside from a difficult personal situation, it returned too quickly to the pressing number of purely practical (methodological) problems. Consequently, the theological question of Evanston was lost again. The reason for the failure of the discussion may be and probably is that the eschatological foundation of evangelistic work was based only on the immediate implications of the Evanston theme rather

than on a comprehensive and thorough examination. Had the theme been exhaustively probed, at least the majority of the participants in the discussion would have achieved clarity and definiteness concerning the terminal-historical element characterizing the problem. But an evaluation of the present stage of the discussion with respect to theological essentials shows that the discussion has scarcely advanced beyond Amsterdam. The interdependence of evangelism and missions is seen only when viewing the situation in the light of the missionary aspect and the resultant necessity for a missionary action in forms borrowed from missions. By and large, the common theological point of departure of evangelism and missions is not clearly understood.

The theological achievements of Evanston necessitate the following conclusion: The evangelistic task of the churches in Europe, America, and Australia as considered in the ecumenical discussion must be understood as a task of *missionary proclamation*; and, therefore, in its theological point of departure, the task must be interpreted *eschatologically*. In other words, consistency demands that evangelism be viewed as "expectant evangelism," as was done principally by two leading spokesmen of the discussion, H. Kraemer and J. C. Hoekendijk. And this view is — if we evaluate the trend of the discussion correctly — and must be its outcome.

There is a danger that the missionary element might be eliminated from the discussion and that the discussion as well as its achievements to date might be oversimplified. If this danger is to be averted, then the Amsterdam conjunction of missions and evangelism must lead to the question given prominence before and at Amsterdam by H. Kraemer and S. C. Neill: Must not the problem of evangelistic work be theologically and practically elucidated on the basis of the problem of missions? To put the matter another way, should not the problematic of evangelism in Europe, America, and Australia be understood with reference to both the nature

and to some extent the form which foreign missions take in proclaiming their message in Asia and Africa? This would insure that the churches regard their existence and task as a missionary body in relation to nothing less than the entire world, even if they proclaim the gospel, for the purpose of gathering the people of God, in their immediate (geographical) surroundings, and on occasion, also among those who just barely belong to the church. This would secure the theological validity and the practical worth of this task. In addition, isolationism would be reduced and the danger of individualistic piety and institutionalized church activity eliminated. But it must be clearly understood that the missionary task of the churches, wherever ventured, can be fulfilled only by such common action of the churches as anticipates their unity. The missionary task cannot be fulfilled through independent action by the churches. This would illuminate the ecumenical significance of evangelism in Europe, America, and Australia. The gospel demands the world; and it demands the unity of the church.

II

The Course of the Ecumenical Discussion on the Major Questions of Willingen and Evanston

When the International Missionary Council met at Willingen, missions were at a theologically critical point. The purpose of the meeting, "to make the Missionary Obligation of the Church a matter of fresh theological enquiry,"¹ led to the question of the biblical basis of missions. In a large part of the preparatory work this question was closely connected with the biblical promise of the *future of Christ*. The discussion at Willingen moved within this viewpoint; the theme of Evanston moved toward it.

1. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL QUESTION

(WILLINGEN)

As far as the main lines of the discussion are concerned, the ecumenical conference of both the International Missionary Council and the movements on "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work" paid hardly any attention to the biblical promise of the future of Christ. They scarcely even presupposed it. The problem as such and its significance for the church's proclamation and its unity was not recognized. The author of a survey² written for the main theme of the Evanston Assembly had to turn to the report of the Second World

¹ N. Goodall, "Willingen—Milestone, Not Terminus," *Missions Under the Cross: Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements Issued by the Meeting*, ed. N. Goodall (London: Edinburgh House Pr., 1953), p. 19.

² W. Schweitzer, *Eschatology and Ethics* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1951).

Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh (1937) in order to find, in the section entitled, "The Church and the Kingdom of God," only a rather indefinite and quite formal statement concerning the "expectation to the consummation of the Kingdom in the future . . . until its full manifestation when God shall be all in all."

In the message of the First Assembly of the World Council at Amsterdam (1948), an orientation similar to the above may be discerned in the statements announcing "that the end of history will be the triumph of His Kingdom" and that men are to be called "to hope for his coming."

The most important utterance on the problem to which the elaboration of the theme of Evanston was pointed, is found without a doubt in the so-called German declaration presented to the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras (1938). The declaration was presented as a minority report by K. Hartenstein and W. Freytag and was supported by H. Kraemer among others. It was directed against the tendency prevalent in the discussion to reduce the conception of the kingdom of God to a "social gospel" program and sought that the meeting's confession of faith take cognizance of the terminal-historical components of the kingdom. The declaration reads in part:

We are bound by conscience to point to some vital principles of the Gospel, which must be emphasized in contrast with certain passages in the reports of some sections. In the Apostles' Creed, we all confess together that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. In spite of the changes which have taken place in the aspect of the world and history since the days of the Apostles, we believe according to the Scriptures that, through a *creative act of God*, His Kingdom will be consummated in the final establishment of a New Heaven and a New Earth. Christ has conquered for us sin and death and overcome the world, so that we share with Him His Eternal Life. But at the same time this our new life is hid with Christ in God. . . . Only this *eschatological* attitude can prevent the Church from becoming secularized. Expectation of the coming Lord and His Judgment means that

the Church is always at work, . . . highly active in witnessing by word and deed, and so proclaiming the Lord's death till he comes.³

In this declaration the eschatological question perceptibly and durably made its first appearance in the ecumenical discussion. In 1953 H. P. van Dusen said: "What fifteen years ago was a barely heard protest of a tiny minority has now become the fulcrum of ecumenical discussion."⁴

THE ACCENT ON ESCHATOLOGY IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR WILLINGEN

During the war and the first postwar years, the declaration at Tambaram kindled the attempt to surmount theologically the crisis in missions. The declaration was first elaborated in Germany and was there accorded significance for the question as to the reason, aim, message, and basis of missions. This achievement decisively influenced the preparations for Willingen. In retrospect from Willingen and Evanston, a few simple points manifest themselves. Three streams became significant:

The German Work

The German work was first undertaken at the beginning of the years of isolation during World War II, shortly after the declaration at Tambaram. The chief proponents of the work were O. Michel, K. Hartenstein and W. Freytag,⁵ though the impulse emanated most strongly from K. Hartenstein. W. Freytag's essay, "Mission im Blick aufs Ende," should be regarded as a condensation and systematic pro-

³ "A statement by some members of the meeting (presented by the chairman of the German delegation)," *The Authority of the Faith* ("The Madras Series: Presenting Papers Based upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938," Vol. I [New York: International Missionary Council, 1939]), pp. 169 ff.

⁴ H. P. Van Dusen, "The Issues of Christian Hope," *op. cit.*, p. 1359.

⁵ Cf. W. Freytag, "Missionary Thinking in Germany in Recent Years," *International Review of Missions*, XXXV (1946), 396-97.

jection of separate studies on the theological question regarding the foundation of missions, evangelism, and the determination of the aims of missionary efforts. With "Aim I" of the conference at Willingen in mind, this work was continued and carried into the preparations for Willingen, which provided a foundation in biblical theology for the missionary task of the church.⁶

The fundamental tenor of these German efforts may be succinctly summarized as follows:

(1) "When oriented to the end missions receive a decisive foundation."

(2) "The message of the end is an essential feature of evangelism."

(3) "Orientation to the end is a decisive feature in determining the aim of missionary efforts."⁷

The Work of M. A. C. Warren

Following the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Whitby, Canada (1947),⁸ which was mainly devoted to the exchange of information and ideas, the General Secretary of the (Anglican) Church Missionary Society published a series of essays⁹ in 1948 edited by him and also a fundamental study of his own on the Christian hope.¹⁰ At

⁶ W. Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 153-61. W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, 404-12. K. Hartenstein, "Der gekreuzigte Herr—die Hoffnung für die Welt," *Oekumenische Rundschau*, I (1952), 43-52.

⁷ W. Freytag, "Mission im Blick aufs Ende," *Evangelische Missions Zeitschrift*, III (1942), 321, 325, 332.

⁸ C. W. Ranson (ed.), *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World* (London: Edinburgh House Pr., 1948).

⁹ M. A. C. Warren (ed.), *The Triumph of God. A Series of Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, 1948).

¹⁰ M. A. C. Warren, *The Truth of the Vision: A Study in the Nature of the Christian Hope* (London: Canterbury Pr., 1948).

Whitby an utterly new departure for missions¹¹ was strongly felt to be both possible and necessary. In this connection the familiar phrase, "partnership in obedience," as well as the expression, "expectant evangelism,"¹² were coined. Utilizing the insights of Whitby, M. A. C. Warren raised the question of the foundation and task of missions. His answer, which is directly related to the German efforts during the war, enlarged upon them. For missions the "primary task . . . is to prepare for the Kingdom . . . preparing for the end which God will contrive." According to this interpretation, the church is called "a preparing community," "a genuine brotherhood of expectancy," whose task it is "to prepare the world for the coming Kingdom, whether the world will hear or whether will forbear." He regards the aim of his book as consisting "in a genuine recovery by the Christian Church of an eschatology which will animate every part of its life."¹³ Finally, with Willingen in mind, M. A. C. Warren wrote two articles based on *The Truth of the Vision*.¹⁴ One of these became important especially for the question of the Christian hope; the other, for the problem of time and the question of the relationship between history and the history of salvation.

11 From the declaration, "Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World": "... we dare to believe it possible that, before the present generation has passed away, the Gospel should be preached to almost all the inhabitants of the world in such a way as to make clear to them the issue of faith or disbelief in Jesus Christ." "Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World," *Renewal and Advance*, p 215.

12 The formula will not be found in the documents of Whitby. However, M. A. C. Warren uses it in *The Truth of the Vision*, p. 74 (where he refers to Rom. 8:19 and quotes from the King James Version: "earnest expectation") and in his Willingen address, "The Christian Mission and the Cross," *Missions under the Cross*, p. 40.

13 Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, pp. 133, 71, 77, 156, 71, 144-45.

14 M. A. C. Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church in the Present Historical Situation with Consideration of the Radical New Relationship Between East and West," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 393-408. Also, Warren, "Eschatology and History," *International Review of Missions*, XLI (1952), 337-50.

The Dutch Work

As a result of the doubts cast upon the theological foundations of missions by crisis theology, H. Kraemer endeavored to supply a new theological foundation for missions.¹⁵ With statements springing from his efforts, Dutch missionary science in the postwar period provided a wealth of material pertinent to the eschatological dimension of the world mission. The Dutch efforts were given written form principally by J. C. Hoekendijk, A. A. van Ruler, J. Blauw, and H. N. Ridderbos¹⁶ and were continued after Willingen by E. J. Schoonhoven.¹⁷ Apart from the significance they acquired for the so-called "theology of the Apostolate," the Dutch contributions were gathered in a report composed especially for Willingen, the first part of which — for our purposes the most important — in its condensed form reads as follows:

1. The place of missions in the Christian revelation is determined by:
 - a. the finished work of Christ.
 - b. the perfection of this work in His future.
2. Christ is proclaimed as the One who by His Death and Resurrection has brought about reconciliation with God and has broken the power of Evil; . . . head of the Church . . . Prince of the kings on earth; whose Kingship is in many respects hidden, shall be revealed at the end of time.
3. The finished work of Christ can only be fully understood in the expectation of His future. His future can only be expected as the fulfillment of His finished work. Each depends on the other.
4. The present state of the Church is therefore one of dependence both

¹⁵ H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinbrough House Pr., 1938. See especially pp. 284 ff.

¹⁶ J. C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingwetenschap* ("Bijdragen Tot de Zendingwetenschap," Deel I [Amsterdam: Gron., J. Niemeijer, 1948]), pp. 212 ff. Also, Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 162-75. A. A. van Ruler, *Het Apostolaat van de Kerk en het ontwerp-Kerkorde* (Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach, 1948). J. Blauw, *Het komende Rijk* ("Leidraad voor Zendingstudie" [Amsterdam, 1949]). Cf. also, Blauw, "De voornaamste trekken in het Missionaire denken in Nederland sinds 1945," *Heerban*, V (1952), 25-39, 63-77. H. N. Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1957).

¹⁷ E. Jansen Schoonhoven, "Apostolaat en Eschatologie," *Heerban*, VIII (1955), 89-108.

on this past and on this future. This is the source whence she derives the power for service to Him whose work shall continue until the end of the world, and who assembles His people from among all the nations by the proclamation of the Gospel.

5. The conviction that Jesus Christ is the Lord makes the Church zealous in fulfilling her missionary tasks; it gives her power by witness and practical work to make visible something of Christ's Kingship.

6. This focus on the future of Christ preserves her from over-estimating what she achieves on earth and from the danger of losing her preaching in a social-ethical idealism. On the other hand it preserves her from despair arising from disappointments, since she is sure that her work is not in vain in the Lord.¹⁸

A summation of the central thoughts of all these streams, which initiated and produced the *eschatological concentration* in the ecumenical discussion, is found in an article by J. Blauw, published shortly before Willingen:

Mission is not man's affair, but the affair of the risen Lord of the world, who yearns for the coming of the kingdom of God more ardently than we. In this royal desire of his—and he possesses all power—lies the future of missions.¹⁹

THE ELIMINATION OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL AND TERMINAL-
HISTORICAL VIEW OF MISSIONS IN THE AMERICAN REPORT
ON WILLINGEN

The American Report grappled with the question of the successes and failures of the discussion at Willingen. Its serious and plainly adjuratory tone resulted from apprehension that a broad stream in the international missionary movement might oppose this point of departure and might be able to prevent its realization. Omitting in its preparation

¹⁸ Report published on behalf of the Dutch Missionary Council by the Study Committee on "The Biblical Foundations of Foreign Missions." A preparatory paper written for the Enlarged Conference of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, Germany, in 1952 (mimeographed by the International Missionary Council, New York), p. 5.

¹⁹ J. Blauw, "Willingen 5-18 Juli 1952," *Heerban*, V (1952), 92. Cf. N. Goodall, "Towards Willingen," *International Review of Missions*, XLI (1952), 129-38. Cf. also Goodall, "First Principles," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 257-62, 260. In this article the great importance of W. Freytag and M. A. C. Warren for the discussion becomes conspicuous.

those parts dealing with the eschatological point of departure, the American Report²⁰ which was written on the discussion at Willingen incorporated this broad stream of the international missionary movement, though without becoming absorbed by it. This was done in a new and attractive manner by means of a biblical dynamism of Neo-orthodox stamp.

The (extensive) Report was composed by P. Lehmann, essentially through the utilization of the very careful preliminary studies by P. S. Minear and H. Richard Niebuhr.²¹ Obviously, the Report did not take account of the preliminary studies by A. C. Cochrane, J. W. Heikkinen, and C. Stanley Smith,²² which placed a greater stress on the eschatological aspect of the problem. This fact reflects a great uneasiness — understandable in America — concerning terminal-historical eschatology, which has been repeatedly misunderstood as apocalyptic. The failure of the Report to pay heed to the eschatological emphasis of the preliminary studies mentioned above also makes it clear that the majority of the American commission was unable to combine any biblically appropriate conception with that of eschatology. In fact, the conception of eschatology is greatly lacking in clarity in broad segments of the theology of the Anglo-Saxon world. And in some areas it is a totally alien concept.²³

²⁰ National Council of the Churches of Christ (Committee on Research in Foreign Missions of the Division of Foreign Missions and the Central Department of Research and Survey), "Report of Commission I on the Biblical and Theological Basis of Missions," North American Report on Aim I of the Study of the Missionary Obligation of the Church undertaken by the International Missionary Council (New York, February 1952).

²¹ P. S. Minear, "God's Good News: The Biblical Basis of the Church's Missionary Obligation," n.d. H. Richard Niebuhr, "An Attempt at a Theological Analysis of Missionary Motivation," April 1951.

²² A. C. Cochrane, "Eschatology and Missions," March 1951; J. W. Heikkinen, "The Missionary Motive in the Gospels," April 1951 (both Lutherans). C. Stanley Smith, "An Exploratory Attempt to Define the Theological Basis of the Church's Missionary Obligation," April-May 1951.

²³ For this reason R. L. Calhoun attempted in his lecture at Evanston to elucidate the conception concisely in the course of enumerating difficulties. Cf. W. A. Whitehouse, "The Modern Discussion of Eschatology," in *Eschatology. Four Papers Read to the Society for the Study of Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver Boyd, 1957), pp. 63-90.

A. C. Cochrane offered a profound and critical evaluation of the various aspects of the eschatological question, which for the most part were misrepresented through one-sided emphases. His view is summarized in three sentences which disclose an orientation similar to the three streams of missionary science represented by the Germans, M. A. C. Warren, and the Dutch:

- i) The Church's missionary activity is the constituent element of the "last days."
- ii) The Church's missionary activity not only belongs to eschatological times; it is a sign of the end itself.
- iii) The great missionary command . . . applies to the period between the resurrection and the parousia . . . the kingdom of God will not come without our missions to the Gentiles.²⁴

The Report, characterizing this thrust of biblical theology as "millenarian," manifestly disregards the strictly christological approach to this thrust and holds it suspect due to an (apocalyptic) misconstruction on the part of the authors of the Report.²⁵ Consequently, the Report also remarks that "the varieties of biblical witness have not conduced to any consensus on the calendar or prospectus for the Kingdom"²⁶ (but a calendar was not at all at stake!) and arrives at the following position:

The lordship of the living Christ is . . . the point of departure for the missionary activity of the Church whose Head Christ is. [But] this is an attitude which accounts for obligation not as a derivative from some other conviction or analysis, but as an immediate reaction to the Lord whom we meet in faith. Here missionary motivation is conceived as man's inevitable response to the whole revelation of God in Christ. In this view, missionary obligation is not a deduction, but a reflex of faith. It is spontaneous, not studied; primary, not secondary, prior, not subsequent; reflexive, not derivative. This is the missionary response

²⁴ Cochrane, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

²⁵ National Council of Churches of Christ, "Report of Commission I," p. 28. Cf. R. P. Beaver, "Eschatology in American Missions," *Basileia*, ed. J. Hermelink and H. J. Margull, pp. 60-75.

²⁶ National Council of Churches of Christ, "Report of Commission I," p. 28.

as discipleship. It packs urgency which no other formulation can approach. For this is no *formulation* but a *relation*. . . . If you have heard the news, you must proclaim it! If you have met the Lord, you must introduce him! . . . The missionary motive . . . is not obligation to something (Bible, Gospel, Church or present situation) but response to Someone. . . . The disciple burns his boats and goes ahead.²⁷

The dynamic of this utterance, though failing of the dimension of time, by no means fails of genuine reference to biblical theology. It may well be said that this dynamic is identical with that involved throughout the three eschatological streams leading to Willingen. But obviously the conception of the present in the American Report has been left quite unclear in default of an intelligible clarification of the conception of *time* and thus of the *future*. As a result, the biblical dynamic again stands in danger of covert dissolution. A popular interpretation of the Report²⁸ reveals that not only scientific reasons and interests played a role in the arrival at this position, but also other considerations—hidden, of course—which were inspired by fear of an “eschatological and crisis ecumenism,”²⁹ viewed as typically “continental,” which assumed a veritable emotional character in America. Although a work of W. Freytag as well as the conclusions of M. A. C. Warren’s utterances concerning hope³⁰ were known, the character of the kingdom of God was quite obstinately affirmed strictly in terms of the present, but without achieving an existential interpretation. This was, moreover, soil on which a primitive-activistic conception of the Kingdom luxuriated; this could give rise to the statement that “. . . we do our part to *consolidate* this Kingdom *and* to spread the word about this King.”³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 29–30.

²⁸ T. Gill, “Christian Missions: Whence and Whither (a popular interpretation of ‘Why Mission?’),” March 1952.

²⁹ H. R. T. Brandreth, “Reflexions after Lund,” *International Review of Missions*, XLII (1953), 80.

³⁰ National Council of the Churches of Christ, “Report of Commission I,” p. 28.

³¹ Gill, “Christian Missions,” p. 6 (*my italics*).

WILLINGEN

It was to be expected that in the discussion at Willingen³² the christological, terminal-historical view would evoke a profusion of questions, if not encounter complete rejection. And indeed questions were asked. In the initial evaluation of the meeting, it was maintained that "Willingen asked questions rather than answered them."³³ The fact that questions were asked in such number as well as the rather unsatisfactory quality of the questions themselves characterize the Report of Group I on the "Missionary Obligation of the Church," which was received but not adopted by the meeting.³⁴ This Report dealt with the unresolved problems — and they were precisely those pertinent to the eschatological basis of missions — as follows:

What is the significance of eschatology for the Church's Mission? Some would stress the eschatological significance of Christ's present activity in the Church. Others, *while not denying this*, would add that an eschatology of the Church is an important element in the missionary message. There was agreement that the missionary drive in Marxism, which derives from its secularized eschatology of the classless society, is a judgment on us for neglecting the eschatological element in our missionary message.³⁵

This offers a picture of the difficulties met in the discussions. In fact, the meeting was materially overburdened by the problematic of eschatology, which up to that point had been widely disparaged in the International Missionary Movement

³² N. Goodall, "Willingen—Milestone, Not Terminus," *Missions under the Cross*, p. 10. In concern for the misunderstanding of the work at Willingen, Goodall writes: "The missionary obligation begins with the Gospel, not with theology."

³³ E. J. Bingle, "Asking Questions at Willingen," *World Dominion*, XXX (1952), 280.

³⁴ *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting and the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Willingen, Germany, July 5th to 21st, 1952* (London, 1952), pp. 18–19, 33, 86 ff. (Hereafter referred to as *Willingen, 1952*); *Missions under the Cross*, p. 20; *ibid.*, pp. 238 ff. under the title, "The Theological Basis of the Missionary Obligation (An Interim Report)."

³⁵ *Missions under the Cross*, p. 245 (my italics).

due to precipitate misunderstanding. Nevertheless, it is correct to say:

At Willingen, in contrast to earlier world missionary conferences, the close connection between missions and eschatology was clearly emphasized, and with a considerable measure of general agreement.³⁶

Even K. Hartenstein, despite all his disappointment, notes that at Willingen:

Amid all the unsolved questions, amid all the tension, and amid the various levels of theological maturity, the theological conversation on world missions unceasingly inclined to the rich focal point of the Scriptures. . . . Willingen brought to light anew the central and universal significance of missionary thought in the Holy Scriptures.³⁷

Perhaps the validity of the ecumenical discussion lies not only in its resolutions, but also, and often above all, in the impulses initiated in the course of the discussion. If so, then — apart from the studies preparatory to Willingen, which cannot be overlooked and were finally vindicated at Evanston — the strong tone of two addresses, one by L. Newbigin and the other by P. Minear, already constitutes sufficient effective results. L. Newbigin, former Bishop of Madura and Ramnad, the Church of South India (in 1957 vice-chairman of the Commission on Faith and Order and in 1958 General Secretary of the International Missionary Council), who at the time was chairman of the Advisory Committee on the main theme of the Second Assembly at Evanston, said quite plainly:

He will visible terminate and consummate the world history in which He is now at work hiddenly. There will be a real end. . . . The Gospel is to be preached to all nations and then shall the end come.³⁸

³⁶ W. Anderson, *Towards a Theology of Missions* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1956), p. 56.

³⁷ K. Hartenstein, "Theologische Besinnung," *Mission zwischen Gestern und Morgen*, eds. W. Freytag et al. (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1952), pp. 52-53.

³⁸ L. Newbigin, "The Christian Hope," *Missions under the Cross*, p. 115.

The meeting was confronted with this statement, not in a minority declaration, but in an official report. P. Minear, likewise a member of the Advisory Committee, spoke along the same lines: "Until His return, the Church is . . . to announce the mystery of Christ's triumph to every creature . . ." ³⁹

In the end, the meeting did not resignedly content itself with the unsatisfactory Report of Group I. Instead, the meeting took the question under discussion so seriously that it consented to the authorization of a committee to draft the Report anew under the chairmanship of L. Newbigin and with P. Lehmann, J. J. Chandran, and K. Hartenstein as members. In the new draft the following could finally be adopted as the common expression of the assembly: "God sends forth the Church to carry out His work to the ends of the earth, to all nations, and to the end of time . . . preparing the whole earth for the day of His Coming." ⁴⁰

If the question be carefully read which N. Goodall formulated in the later publication of the Willingen material and if the presuppositions on which that question rests be considered, then it must be said that Willingen did not terminate the discussion, but rather caused *the eschatological ground of missions to penetrate* the ecumenical discussion. The questions are expressed as follows:

What is the relation between "history" and "salvation history," between God's activity in creation and His grace in redemption? . . . What is the meaning of the Christian hope in relation to the message and practise of missions? What is there in the mystery of the Last Things which must affect the character and urgency of the Church's mission?

³⁹ P. S. Minear, "The Covenant and the Great Commission," *Missions under the Cross*, p. 75. But cf. P. S. Minear, "Paul's Missionary Dynamic," *The Andover Newton Theological School Bulletin*, XXXVI (1944), 1-11. The conversation at Willingen and Minear's book, *Christian Hope and the Second Coming* (Philadelphia; Westminster Pr., 1954), sharply contrast with this essay, which was written in 1944.

⁴⁰ "A Statement of the Missionary Calling of the Church," *Missions under the Cross*, pp. 190, 192.

The Gospel must first be preached among all nations. Then shall the end come. With what hope and to what end does the Christian missionary educate men, heal them, preach to them the Gospel of the Kingdom and receive them into the fellowship of the Church? . . . How can every fulfillment by the Church of its missionary obligation become a preparing of the way of the Lord and an expression of the proclamation, Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh? . . . What is the bearing of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the nature of the Church and the Christian ministry?⁴¹

If the import of these questions for the discussion at Evanston and of the far-reaching answer they received there is kept in mind and if the distance from Willingen to Evanston is considered, surely an important achievement can be attributed to Willingen. Missions were generally recognized at Willingen as an eschatological quantity. With this statement the importance of Willingen, which asserted itself only after the meeting, is correctly assessed.⁴² In an article intended to be understood as a bridge between Willingen and Evanston, the following point is made:

The preaching of the Gospel to all nations is itself an eschatological sign. [It] is set in the perspective not simply of obedience to a task, but of a glorious eschatological hope.⁴³

The seed of the so-called German declaration of Tambaram and of the theological work following it had matured. In the theology of missions no one will any longer be able to revert to the point before Willingen.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Goodall, "Willingen—Milestone, not Terminus," *op. cit.*, pp. 20 ff.

⁴² Directly after Willingen, W. Manson declared in "Mission and Eschatology" (*International Review of Missions*, XLII [1953], 392, 397): "The mission of the Church . . . is a phenomenon of the new creation. . . . It looks to the final coming of Christ in His power and glory, and its notes are hope and sense of urgency. . . . In any event, the road to the End is the path of the world mission. It is above that path that the Morning-Star of the Parousia of Christ coruscates and shines."

⁴³ R. A. Nelson, "Mission and Eschatology," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1954), 147 ff.

⁴⁴ On the entire proceedings of the Assembly, cf. J. Beattie, "Willingen, 1952," *International Review of Missions*, XLI (1952), 433-43.

2. "HOPE" AS A MISSIONARY ECUMENICAL THEME (EVANSTON)

The theme of Evanston grew out of the question of evangelism. The consequences of the theme for theological work in the ecumenical movement were unexpected. If an attempt is made to describe concisely the course of the discussion solely on the basis of its central result, the significance of the elaboration of the theme becomes clear. The theme was carried beyond endorsement of Willingen and the achievements attained there, so that a new biblical view of the church and of its proclamation to the world was developed. As in the studies preliminary to Willingen, it was the christological, terminal-historical component that quickened and advanced the discussion the most.

THE MISSIONARY POINT OF DEPARTURE

The decisive cue for the main theme of the Evanston Assembly was introduced into the discussion by E. Bingle during the deliberations of the Central Committee of the World Council at its Third Meeting in Toronto, Canada (1950).⁴⁵ In the search for a central theme, the discussion began with the problem of human freedom and then struck upon the question of evangelism, which demanded more attention than it received at Amsterdam (G. K. A. Bell).⁴⁶ The deliberations gradually focused on this question, with the result that the question of human freedom gave way to the question of the will of God.⁴⁷ By naming the theme "Christian Hope," E. Bingle let it be understood that the

⁴⁵ *Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee of World Council of Churches, Toronto, Canada, July 9-15, 1950* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1950). Hereafter referred to as *Toronto, 1950*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21; "P. Maury indicated that we must not take our lead from the world, but rather from what Christ wants us to say to the world." Similarly, M. Niemoeller, G. Florovsky, *et al.* G. F. Allen: "... evangelism ... must be central in the Assembly." Similarly, Cf. H. P. van Dusen in his summary of J. Baillie.

work of the International Missionary Council fell under the aegis of "expectant evangelism."⁴⁸ At the conclusion of the discussion, the Central Committee accepted this important declaration:

The time has come when the World Council of Churches should make a serious attempt to declare, in relation to the modern world, the faith and hope which are affirmed in its own basis and by which the Churches live. The world is full of false hopes, of fear and despair. Religious indifference is widespread. In the Churches, spiritual power and triumphant hope are not clearly manifest. Though there is much active evangelism, the old paganisms still maintain their power in many parts of the world, while on the other hand there are very few points at which the Church is breaking out of its isolation into the world of those who hold to such modern substitutes for the Gospel as communism and other political messianism, scientific humanism, and certain forms of existentialism, or are indifferent to every religious or quasi-religious faith. The presence of secularism within the Churches is deeply marked. Now as always, man's greatest need is God's greatest opportunity. We think therefore that the main theme of the assembly should be along the lines of the affirmation that *Jesus Christ as Lord is the only hope of both the Church and the world*; and that the subsidiary themes of the Assembly should be considered in relation to this central theme.⁴⁹

ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

To prepare the theme, the Central Committee appointed an Advisory Commission — generally called the Commission of the Twenty-Five — on the main theme for the Second Assembly. This group, while preparing for and pursuing its initial deliberations at Rolle in 1951 by means of brisk literary activity, experienced a surprise which was scarcely understandable after Evanston: "It became clear that Toronto entirely overlooked the fact that this theme broached the theme of Christian eschatology."⁵⁰ This sentence was written

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21. It is interesting to note that S. W. Savarimuthu gave address at the First Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation at Lund in 1947 with the title, "Christ, the Hope of the World" (*Proceedings of the Lutheran World Federation's Assembly, Lund, Sweden* [Philadelphia: 1948], pp. 144-46).

⁴⁹ *Toronto, 1950*, p. 23. The text was written by S. C. Neill.

⁵⁰ E. Schlöck, "Der Stand der oekumenischen Verhandlungen ueber das Thema der naechsten Weltkirchenkonferenz," *Oekumenische Rundschau*, I (1952), 53.

after "the whole problematic concerning eschatology in the present and in the future" came to light in the Advisory Commission's preliminary discussion of the main theme, and "threatened to split" the Commission "on the question as to the proper relation" of these two elements.⁵¹ At the time, this tension in the proceedings was widely publicized, and a great many theologians throughout the world animatedly joined the discussion. The Advisory Commission became the world-stage of Christian theology in the affair. To a great extent the questions were those of Willingen, though more clearly crystallized. L. Newbigin reported on the matter before the Central Committee at Rolle (1951):

When this question [Second Coming] is opened in any representative gathering, large difficulties appear at once. This happened in the meeting of the Advisory Commission. One morning, however, a representative of the German Church told us what had happened under their continued suffering concerning hope and concerning Christ's passion and triumph. This glimpse into the new experience of our German brothers enabled the Commission to begin its work on the present report.⁵²

This first meeting of the Commission, led by H. P. van Dusen, successfully concluded with the fundamental recognition of the *counterpoint* in biblical eschatology. Solely on the question of the "relative emphasis" of the witness "to the coming Christ and the present Christ"⁵³ had no unity

⁵¹ H. Vogel, "Jesus Christ—die Hoffnung der Welt," *Oekumenische Rundschau*, II (1953), 97-98.

⁵² *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle, Switzerland, August 4-11, 1951* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1951), p. 16. According to Vogel in "Jesus Christ—die Hoffnung der Welt," *op cit.*, p. 98, it was "the simple exposition of the Word of Holy Scripture [from the mouth of Edmund Schlink]" that held the Commission together and brought it "to a path enabling a more extensive and deep consensus than we would have thought possible."

⁵³ L. Newbigin and W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The First Report of the Advisory Commission on the Theme of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 71-79. On the reverberations of this report cf. "Comments on the First Report of the Advisory Commission on the Theme of the Second Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 161-73. L. Newbigin, E. Schlink, R. Mehl, and D. McKinnon reply to this in "The Nature of the Christian Hope," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 282-85. On the debate and other points cf. "American Church Leaders on the Theme of the Second Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 413-30.

been achieved. Under this aspect the question on the continuity and discontinuity of the church with the world appeared, and in the First Report of the Commission the question took a form fundamental for the conclusive Third Report. The frankness of the inquiry and the theological accomplishments of the Commission's meeting made this one of the best instances of ecumenical discussion. Through the biblical awareness of E. Schlink, the terminal-historical component of eschatology was clearly seen and accepted.

The significance of the Evanston theme began to manifest itself here. The conference of Willingen benefited from this thorough and keen debate in the persons of L. Newbigin and P. S. Minear. The Commission had not arrived at the question of the primarily missionary connection of the theme. A statement on this aspect was also lacking in the Report.

The second meeting of the Advisory Commission took place a year later, in 1952, at Bossey under the chairmanship of L. Newbigin. After a consideration of the manifold criticisms of the First Report, the center of the discussion on the Second Report became:

the large question, novel in its concreteness . . . as to the relation between *hopes* and the *one great hope*. The plural, "hopes," refers to things such as we hope for for ourselves and others in the earthly and temporal realm, whereas the one great hope shines forth from the end of the perishing world, the goal of history.⁵⁴

The Report is organized correspondingly.⁵⁵ In the context of intensified discussion concerning "true and false eschatology," "the new age in history" and "beyond the end of history," and the concrete significance of these for daily life, a debate ensued inherited from the World Conference of Churches at Oxford (1937) and from the First Assembly at Amsterdam. This debate came to grips with Stalinism,

⁵⁴ Vogel, "Jesus Christ—die Hoffnung der Welt," p. 98.

⁵⁵ "Second Report of the Advisory Commission on the Theme of the Second Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, V (1952), 73-98.

scientific humanism, and democratic utopianism as forms of widespread and influential non-Christian hopes. Consequently, the question of something new confronting evangelism — later to command our interest in detail — was significantly related to the subject under discussion. The end of the Report even dealt briefly, though insufficiently, with this question. However, it was characteristic of the Report, which was written before the impulses from Willingen became effective, that, among the false hopes, it ignored the fact that evangelism is confronted primarily by the pagan world in the strong, institutionalized form of the non-Christian religions.

Two conferences, one before and one after the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Commission, took place independently of one another in connection with the preliminary work on the main theme of Evanston. The one conference, held in two sections, in Holland and the United States, had as its theme, "The Meaning of ~~Hope~~ in the Bible." It pursued the elaboration of especially exegetical and biblical-theological questions of eschatology. At this conference the tensions in the interpretation of the biblical statement openly came to view, and without resolution. The other conference was the Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia held at Lucknow, India, in December, 1952.⁵⁶ In conjunction with the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Commission, this conference supplied the necessary reference to religions other than Christianity in particular and to the significance of the main theme for the churches in Asia in general.

In 1953, for the third and final time, the Commission met at Bossey again to work on the formulations of the preceding three years and on the vast material proposed to the Commission. The purpose of the deliberations was not only to present the Assembly with a report, but also to offer Christian-

⁵⁶ *Christ—the Hope of Asia: Papers and Minutes of the Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia. Lucknow, India, December 27-30, 1952* (Madras, India: The Christian Literature Society, 1953). Cf. E. C. Bhatty, "Christ—the Hope of Asia," *International Review of Missions*, XLIV (1955), 93-98.

ity and the world a suitable explication of the theme. Precisely through the latter purpose the Commission evolved an awareness for the significance attached to history in eschatology. The Commission succeeded in regaining the terminal-historical dynamic, which had been called in question at its second meeting, and in developing the missionary implications of the theme. The concluding report,⁵⁷ on which any inquiry into the results of the discussion must fundamentally rely, is divided into three major sections. The first section deals with the central christological moorings of hope (cross, resurrection, judgment, promise) within the polarity of the kingdom of God as that which has come and is coming. The second section, under the heading, "Christ and His People," discusses the church, which as the "pilgrim people of God"⁵⁸ is on the way to the completion of the body of Christ in missions, unity, and renewal. The third, finally, revolves about the world, whose historical center is Jesus Christ⁵⁹ and over against whose arbitrary hopes ("democratic humanism," "scientific humanism," "Marxism," "national and religious renaissance," and esthetic existentialism as the "hope of the hopeless"⁶⁰) the proclamation and life of the church⁶¹ must be placed, namely, by reason of the hope inherent in Christ and in him alone.

Thus the Report had completed the circle of discussion. It began at Toronto under the aspect of missions and with a view to the preliminary studies for the Willingen conference. It encountered the difficulties connected with the

⁵⁷ *Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the Second Assembly* (New York: Harper, 1954). The Report is divided into paragraphs to which the present citations conform. Preliminary articles on the publication of the Report: L. Newbigin, "The Present Christ and the Coming Christ," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1954), 118-23. R. Mehl, "The Hope of the Marxist," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1954), 124-28. R. A. Nelson, "Mission and Eschatology," *op. cit.*, pp. 147-56.

⁵⁸ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 27 ff.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 65 ff.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 71 ff.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 109 ff.

controversial question of eschatology in biblical theology. Subsequently, it confronted the Christian hope, as hope in the crucified and risen Christ, with earthly hopes. Finally, after a thorough and fruitful deepening of this pointed question, the discussion turned to that relationship of missions with the theme which marked even the form of the Report. The Report is a concrete affirmation of the hope, the message of Christ, which is that "testimony to the world . . . is the meaning of the Church's existence in every age and every clime."⁶²

H. Vogel's comment on the Evanston theme also characterizes the Report:

In a pre-eminent sense, the conception of the theme is missionary and diaconal. From the outset the theme does not permit the hope, implicit in the name of Jesus Christ, to be understood in terms of the self-limitation and self-sufficiency of the church.⁶³

It follows that the Report, which constitutes the theological expression of the Assembly, is intended to be read within a missionary context and that the Assembly is properly understood only if regarded fundamentally in its relevance to missions. Only in this relationship do the full riches of the hitherto unsurpassed results achieved in the elaboration of the Evanston theme become accessible. The Report is a gem of recent theology and an outstanding example of the results of ecumenical discussion.

THE SHIFT FROM ECCLESIOLOGY TO CHRISTOLOGY
(LUND)

It has already been indicated that the theological inquiry into the theme of Evanston had been preparatory for a decisive shift—at least for the leading contributors—in the

⁶² *Ibid.*, ¶ 128. According to P. S. Minear, it was the intention of the Report "to turn a deaf ear": "Christ—the Hope of the World. The Advisory Commission at Work," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 6.

⁶³ H. Vogel, "Ausschuss der 25 in Rolle 20.-30. Juli 1951, 50 Thesen," *Oekumenische Rundschau*, I (1952), 57.

point of departure for the discussion on Faith and Order at Lund (1952). Theological impulses streamed upon the conference from the work of the Preparatory Commission and from the work of the Willingen Assembly, held shortly before this conference, and lent it a strong eschatological and missionary tone. These theological impulses intensified the crisis⁶⁴ towards which the movement on Faith and Order was tending after the conclusion of the work preliminary to Lund.⁶⁵ The crisis, which was given note chiefly by E. Schlink, revolved around the inadequate method used up to that time. The method consisted in evaluating the assembled churches in broad retrospect and in subjecting them to comparison; but it was inadequate because it did "not reckon with changes and . . . [did] not demand sacrifices from the churches" and because "the vanguard of the pilgrim Church of God seems to be further ahead, in practice, than our theory would warrant."⁶⁶ This statement took account of the courageous achievement of church unification in the mission fields of Asia and Africa. At Lund the church was recognized as a "pilgrim people"⁶⁷ standing "between the first and second Advent of Christ" and looking "towards her Master who is coming again"⁶⁸ and was discerned in its *provisional, historical character*.⁶⁹ This stimulated a forward movement which is rightly regarded as the end of one epoch

⁶⁴ E. Schlink, "The Pilgrim People of God," *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, August 15-28, 1952*, ed. O. S. Tomkins, pp. 151-61. O. S. Tomkins, "Implications of the Ecumenical Movement," *Lund, 1952*, pp. 161-73.

⁶⁵ On this point see especially: *The Nature of the Church*, ed. N. Flew (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1952); *The Church. A Report of a Theological Commission in Preparation for the Third World Conference on Faith and Order* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1951).

⁶⁶ Schlink, "The Pilgrim People of God," *Lund, 1952*, p. 151.

⁶⁷ "Report," *Lund, 1952*, p. 20.

⁶⁸ Schlink, *loc. cit.* In a similar vein: W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Second Assembly," *Lund, 1952*, p. 186.

⁶⁹ W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, pp. 409, 412.

of ecumenical theology and the beginning of another.⁷⁰ As "eschatological reality" the church is "made one with Him in the fellowship of his life, death and resurrection, of his suffering and his glory. For what concerns Christ concerns his body also."⁷¹ "This means that the Church is called to continue the mission of Jesus Christ to the world, so that the way of Christ is the way of His Church."⁷²

The christological shift in the point of departure was thus accomplished surprisingly fast. It not only led to the topic, "Christ and His Church,"⁷³ which was important for further discussion on questions of Faith and Order, but it also put the Preparatory Commission in particular in a position, with respect to the Second Assembly, to apply its deliberations on eschatology and missions to the church and its tasks in the world. And the Commission was able to do this without having to fear gross misunderstanding or even rejection at the hands of the movement on Faith and Order. In the Third Report⁷⁴ the Commission was able to make statements concerning the body of Christ and through these statements achieved a sharp and daring emphasis on the description of the essence and task of the church. But such statements are unthinkable without the decisive work and results of Lund (which were later unfortunately neglected in many places). In these proceedings it can be seen that the theme of Christian hope brought an eschatological concentration to the ecumenical movement of the churches just as the work of Willingen brought an eschatological concentration to the ecumenical movement of missions.

⁷⁰ T. F. Torrance, "Wohin fuehrt Lund?" *Evangelische Theologie*, XII (1952/53), 499.

⁷¹ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Faith and Order and the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches," *Lund*, 1952, p. 136.

⁷² "Report," *Lund*, 1952, p. 18.

⁷³ Cf. A. C. Outler, "A Way Forward from Lund," *Ecumenical Review*, V (1952), 59-63. A. Nygren (quoted in *Ecumenical Review*, V [1952], p. 101): "... The road to unity is the road to the centre."

⁷⁴ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶¶ 27 ff.

EVANSTON

The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches was faced with the question whether it should reject the Report of the Advisory Commission introduced by E. Schlunk⁷⁵ and R. L. Calhoun,⁷⁶ or accept the Report on its own responsibility, or take note of the Report and recommend it to the churches. The discussion became heated from time to time, and sharp differences among theological conceptions were expressed; but the Assembly accepted the Report and provided the churches with a statement for their own study, prayer, and encouragement. The Assembly could not surpass the Report;⁷⁷ its practical aspect asked even more than the Assembly could meet. Thus the Assembly was able, at the most, to lend concreteness to the discussion of the Report by an attempt to appropriate it. By accepting the Report and commending it to the churches for prayer and study, the Assembly gave its support to an endeavor with a theological center which was clearly perceived and affirmed. In this latter point lies the importance of Evanston. This step marks the *breakthrough of eschatology* in the ecumenical discussion, which was immediately followed by the breakthrough of the eschatological ground of missions. What had remained almost an open question at Willingen was confirmed, even if hesitantly on the whole, at Evanston.

Although many points were smoothed over and many differences of opinion were not thoroughly discussed, especially in the work groups, it is important to emphasize the promising aspect in the ecumenical discussion. This was done authoritatively in the Assembly with the following statement on the Report:

⁷⁵ E. Schlunk, "Christ—the Hope of the World."

⁷⁶ R. L. Calhoun, "Christ—the Hope of the World."

⁷⁷ W. Freytag, "Impressions of the Evanston Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, VII (1954), 9–13.

It indicates the direction in which we must all move: Away from ourselves towards Christ, our only hope, away from human desires, doctrines and ideologies towards the Word of God which alone has eternal authority and power, away from the godless self-centredness of this world towards the Kingdom of Christ.⁷⁸

One can sense from this declaration — despite the fact that the Report represents “a substantial ecumenical consensus”⁷⁹ — how strongly the achievements of Evanston were conceived by the Assembly as a task for the churches and for theological inquiry. The task is still far from fulfillment. Let no one be given to the illusion that this matter would have been dealt with resolutely by the majority of the churches at Evanston!

The task, however, is also related to the extension of the ecumenical discussion with respect to its own particular objects. The reports of the discussion sections at Evanston undoubtedly represented progress, but they did not correspond to the expectations entertained in the work on the main theme. That circumstance sets the task and fixes the theme for the present book with regard to the discussion on evangelism.

⁷⁸ *The Evanston Report*, p. 70.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

III

Result of the Discussion: Message and Basis of Evangelism

The preceding brief presentation of the course of the discussion has shown how the christological, terminal-historical aspect of eschatology broke through the chains of rejection, misconstruction, and misrepresentation. In the tension between "already" and "not yet," the being and task of the church in the world were recognized. The factual results of the discussion which have already been mentioned indicate how the ecumenical discussion found itself on a path leading directly to an adequate expression of biblical eschatology.

If the result of the discussion is now systematically presented from the viewpoint of the message and basis of evangelism, this does not mean that a segment has been excised from the discussion as a whole; rather this follows through to the absolute core of eschatology and of the discussion. For the message and basis of evangelism is Jesus Christ as He who has come and who is coming; while, conversely, the gospel, which was given at the time of Jesus Christ and which once and for all qualifies that time historically, is directed to the world in a primarily missionary manner. It is by no means accidental that the question of eschatology rose out of the question regarding evangelism.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the proclamation of the kingdom, and the establishment and promise of His kingdom materialize through this proclamation. Just as the biblical conception of the kingdom or lordship of God plays an important role in the history of the theology of modern mis-

sions, so the same biblical conception also plays an important role in the ecumenical discussion. The essential aim of evangelism is determined by the specific way in which this conception is framed; and eschatology is determined by the specific way in which it appears in the order of theology. Eschatology in the ecumenical discussion has given the conception of the kingdom of God precedence over the conception of the church, although with hesitancy here and there and with considerable reservations. This precedence expresses the fact that, on the whole, the churches are regarded as functioning in the service of the kingdom. The conception of the church, as indicated at Evanston, derives from this very point.

The following could serve as a summary of Willingen and Evanston:

The *message* is Jesus Christ! The message is Jesus Christ, though, in a clear-cut sense transcending the past formulations of the ecumenical discussion: it is a message of Jesus Christ as one who has come, is coming, and *shall come again*, a message of Jesus Christ as the *expected* Lord of the world, which has already been consigned to him. He is the end of the world as the one who will "gather the new humanity" and bring forth a "new creation."¹ Thus he is the gospel with unrestricted relevance to the entire world and its time. He is the *hope* of the world!

The *basis* is Jesus Christ. The basis is Jesus Christ, though, in a direct and clearer sense, new to the ecumenical discussion. The basis of evangelism is the *self-proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord (autobasileia)* with a view to his *kingdom*,² which will be manifest in splendor in his

¹ E. Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *Christus—die Hoffnung der Welt; ein Bericht ueber die zweite Weltkirchenkonferenz, Evanston, August, 1954*, eds. H. Grueber and G. Brennecke (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1954), p. 39.

² *Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the Second Assembly*, ¶ 3.

future and which will “be the end of the world.”³ “We evangelise, but it is He who is the Evangelist, the Messiah . . . who is gathering the nations.”⁴ “Jesus Christ is the gospel we proclaim. He is also Himself — the Evangelist.”⁵ He is the *hope* — we may add — of *evangelism* also in its present emergency!

1. EVANGELISM AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The theological point of departure in the problem of evangelism is its foundation. The missionary motive is constituent in the scientific foundation of missions, which are constantly in mind in this study and which form the primary object of consideration. Through the missionary motive missionary science tests the self-understanding of missions in the context of the biblical statement. Consequently the restudy of missions, induced by the ecumenical discussion since Tambaram in 1938, concerned itself extensively and primarily with the question of the missionary motive. It was a matter of scrutinizing the traditional motives and, in recognition of their biblical inadequacy, of developing the biblical view of missions.

The results arrived at in this manner define in principle the starting point and aim of the missionary proclamation (evangelism) of the church in its practice of evangelism and home missions. The theological statement on this matter is obtained with constant regard for the conception of the kingdom of God in its eschatological tension of present and future.

THE TRADITIONAL MOTIVE FOR MISSIONS

In a concise survey which appropriately stressed the exigencies of the discussion, W. Freytag pointed out four in-

³ Schlunk, “Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt,” *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁴ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 39.

⁵ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 98.

stances which reflect "a characteristic contraction of the kingdom of God outlook, if not in doctrine, certainly in the understanding of the meaning and purpose of missions."⁶

The four are:

- 1) The "pietistic missions"
- 2) The "missions of the Church"
- 3) The philanthropic-evolutionistic missions
- 4) The apocalyptic-coercive missions

These four have "very much crossed and influenced each other in the course of history." They have been borne "by a sense of self-assertion."⁷ J. C. Hoekendijk⁸ and M. A. C. Warren⁹ have gone on record in a similar vein. The American Report concurred in part.

Freytag offers an evaluation in detail: "The pietistic mission," with which "a powerful new force broke out . . . had a conception of the Kingdom of God which was narrowed down to a purely spiritual and individualist-ethical outlook . . . Missions took their course from one individual to another. It was a matter of the salvation of souls and fundamentally the Kingdom of God was the sum total of those who had saved themselves out of the world."¹⁰

⁶ W. Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1960), 155.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

⁸ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1960), 163 ff.

⁹ M. A. C. Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church in the Present Historical Situation with Consideration of the Radical New Relationship between East and West," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 400 ff.

¹⁰ Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 155. Likewise, Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 165. National Council of the Churches of Christ, "Report of Commission I on the Biblical and Theological Basis of Missions," *North American Report on Aim I of the Study of the Missionary Obligation of the Church Undertaken by the International Missionary Council*, p. 28.

[For] the missions of the Church . . . it was a matter of planting the Church. Obviously no one thought that the churches must be identified with the Kingdom of God, and yet the idea of the Kingdom of God was so narrowed that it collapsed with the Church.¹¹

Philanthropic evolutionistic missions are to be found "over a wider field in the Anglo-Saxon countries than on the Continent." These missions, for which "the needs of mankind" determined the motive, arrived at an "idealistic-socio-ethical contraction of the conception of God's Kingdom."¹²

For all three motives, says Freytag, "the accent falls on the this-worldly side rather than on the side of the world to come."¹³

Warren's comment on the "missions of the Church" also applies to the others:

These missionary motives have no dynamic view of the future except as the endless repetition of the present until at some moment God decides to wind up history by a final judgment. On this view we are saved by perseverance, not by hope; by works, not by faith.¹⁴

J. C. Hoekendijk is of a similar opinion. When Freytag, Warren, and Hoekendijk draw all these distinctions among theological nuances, which are characteristic of their thought, they have an object in mind which has serious consequences primarily for arriving at the missionary motive. But, as remains to be seen, such deliberations are also consequential for the whole theological effort to develop self-understanding within Christianity. Even if unintentionally here and there, all three motives sketched above basically tend to make the Kingdom of God manifest in missions and to anticipate its fulfilment through some particular means or form. The striking unsophistication, especially of Freytag in summarizing many highly complex features among the three groups of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *op. cit.*, p. 401.

missionary motives finds its justification in the simple fact that every impetus to activate faith, to materialize the church and to execute the task of Christians for a world calling for the simplest help, is in danger (and probably will succumb) of realizing for itself what is God's own work in the fulfilment of his Kingdom. Succumbing to this danger is tantamount to curtailing the dawning kingdom in one aspect or another and therefore to darkening the kingdom at least at its onset. The trouble envisaged here consists in this, that a willing, indeed a holy acceptance of service for Christ's sake tends to become somewhat tragically confused with man's characteristic grasp for self-endorsement. This position consequently does not lead to a settling of accounts with the past. On the contrary, it necessarily points to the primary possibility found in all evangelism (and of course not only there) of ultimately enlisting this acceptance of service for Christ's sake into service for oneself, instead of letting acceptance of service be an eschatological act of God, in which Christians are called at baptism to participate as "unworthy servants." (Luke 17:10).

In evangelism as understood here everything the church possesses as its own is taken from it. The importance attributed here to the eschatological foundation, the eschatological message, and the eschatological aim of evangelism is shown by a problem which was ingeniously drawn by J. C. Hoekendijk into the question of traditional missionary motives. The problem is that of the *Corpus Christianum*, the community formed in a Christian context and Christianized throughout. Ideally, this community was ruled by pastoral proclamation in its attempt at extreme penetration and domination. Historically, the community became an unexamined point of departure primarily for evangelism in the pagan world, but also for evangelism among those who had broken away from the "context" of Christian life and thought. In this way, as can be inferred from J. C. Hoekendijk's statements, the kingdom of God was forced into symbiosis with the Christian

world. The geographic expansion and final, comprehensive materialization of that Christian world provided the primitive substructure for the missionary motives mentioned above and for the understanding of evangelization and home missions.

The renunciation of the conception of Corpus Christianum

When rightly viewed, the renunciation of the conception of *Corpus Christianum* as a theological presupposition for the prosecution of missions and for the life of the churches was first demanded in the ecumenical discussion by H. Kraemer. Although of fundamental importance, this was one of the almost unnoticed premises of his preparatory work on the missions of the church and the elements confronting them for the meeting at Tambaram in 1958. According to H. Kraemer the *Corpus Christianum* is:

That indissoluble unity of the Church, Community and State which . . . is dangerously united with the pagan ideal of religion, namely, that religion is a cult which is recognized by the community (or state) as its basic foundation, and which therefore is valid for and obligatory on every member of the community. This pagan conception . . . was blended with the Christian idea of the Church.¹⁵

The renunciation was based on (and beyond Kraemer is based on) three arguments:

1) The "shattering of the *Corpus Christianum*"¹⁶ due to its internal disintegration through the influence of the a-religious secularism of modern man and the separation of church and state;

2) The existence of churches in Asia and Africa as churches of the minority in an exclusively pagan environment which has not allowed itself to be drawn into the "Christian West"

¹⁵ H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, pp. 26-27. Also, among others, Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *op. cit.*, p. 402.

¹⁶ Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 28.

—thus churches exist outside of the “Christian area” and these churches have to be taken seriously by the [old] churches.¹⁷

3) The eschatological view of the church.¹⁸

Kraemer says of the third argument that it is:

The real motive . . . of working on the assumption . . . that the Church must be a community in which faith, worship and life are not expressions of “custom,” but in which the truth revealed in Christ is the criterion of faith and life, transcending all other criteria and authorities.¹⁹

A statement of K. Hartenstein made in connection with the beginning of the work of the Advisory Commission for the Second Assembly makes it clear that the question of overcoming the *Corpus Christianum* has been very closely associated with the question of de-secularizing the church: “. . . The Western synthesis of church, state and people, fulfilled in the great conception of the Christian West, signifies nothing less than an usurpation of the ‘eschaton,’ a premature appropriation of the kingdom of God by the church of history. . . .” In contrast to this the “very promising procedure” of calling into question the *Corpus Christianum* clears

¹⁷ *Ibid.* At this point the question arises as to whether, in general, ecumenical thought becomes possible only when the conception of “Corpus Christianum” is abandoned. This is entirely independent of the circumstances in the West, i.e., whether “Corpus Christianum” is or is not a fact in the West. The renunciation of the conception of the “Corpus Christianum” is demanded theologically if one intends to take the churches in Asia and Africa seriously as churches. Recently, R. K. Orchard in “The Concept of Christendom and the Christian World Mission: A Question” (*Basileia. Walter Freytag zum 60. Geburtstag* pp. 474–88) has studied the question whether a renunciation of the conception of “Corpus Christianum” is in fact theologically commendable. This reflection depends of course on the attempt to describe “Christendom” in completely new terms and therefore with regard to the churches in Asia and Africa.

¹⁸ Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, pp. 416–17, *passim*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58. Cf. H. Kraemer, “Continuity or Discontinuity,” *The Authority of the Faith* (“The Madras Series,” I), 1–23. Also to be found here is the debate on Kraemer’s position (since then accepted in essence) concerning the relation of the Christian message to religion and the religions. In particular cf. W. M. Horton, “Between Hocking and Kraemer,” *The Authority of the Faith*, pp. 148–62.

the way so "that the 'corpus' of Christ, namely, his body, the true Church, is seen anew and is able to come into existence."²⁰

The conception of the *Corpus Christianum*, which includes the claim to its realization and preservation and the reckoning with its reality in the churches' proclamation, is therefore rejected for the sake of the church as the body of Christ, which, as bearer of the witness to Christ in the world for the sake of the world to come, cannot be dissolved. Over against the *Corpus Christianum*, as a world made one through Christianity and regarded as an essentially complete world, stands the kingdom of God, which works in the world insofar as it already exists but which is withdrawn from the world insofar as it does not yet exist. In this background the statements of J. C. Hoekendijk, who, in this respect is pre-eminently H. Kraemer's pupil, are to be viewed. His statements are in part dependent on his enthusiastic personality and often lack sufficient basis. They have to be taken up again in Part II of the present study and pursued further. Beyond the scope of the statements by Freytag and Warren, J. C. Hoekendijk has not only missions in mind; he is thinking of the complete questionableness of the tacit presuppositions which, though surmounted in many places, are elsewhere still alive today. These presuppositions dominate the evangelistic efforts of the churches, even if they are not apparent. It is the apprehension of the minority — in the final analysis, the egoism of the group — that prevails amid the noblest intentions and that, in practice, widely holds evangelization in the grip of the conception of *Corpus Christianum*:

To put it bluntly: the call to evangelism is often little else than a call to restore "Christendom," the "Corpus Christianum," as a solid, well-integrated cultural complex, directed and dominated by the Church. And the sense of urgency is often nothing but a nervous feeling of insecurity, with the established Church endangered; a flurried activity to save the

²⁰ K. Hartenstein, "Einfuehrung in den 'Ersten Bericht,'" p. 45.

remnants of a time now irrevocably past. . . . These are some of the undisclosed motives. In fact the word "evangelize" often means a Biblical camouflage of what should rightly be called the reconquest of ecclesiastical influence. Hence this undue respect for statistics and this insatiable ecclesiastical hunger for ever more areas of life. We touch here upon one of the crucial problems of evangelism.²¹

The revival sermon, which really aimed at much more theologically, is based on this presupposition:

The remarkable fact is that it was those very groups in which the springs of modern evangelism are to be found that were most keenly aware of the total transformation that had come over society. Both the Pietists and the Methodists protested violently against the spirit of the age. They realized that individualism completely lacked the spiritual setting for their work. Yet they continued as if they still lived in Christendom. They tried to isolate individuals and assemble them in an island of the saved, floating on a flood of perdition. Later on, not even the French Revolution and the Revolution of 1848 were enough to open people's eyes and to make them realize that Christendom was past. Wichern set the tone for the time to come. Evangelism was simply conceived of as an extension of the Church, as it actually is in Christendom. A little modification of language might be desirable, but in principle evangelism was a repetition of the Church on a large scale.²²

In pursuance of his pointed historical analysis, Hoekendijk comes to an additional conclusion. In causal connection with the fusion of the *Corpus Christianum* ("Christendom") and the church in evangelism, the biblical teaching of the church concerning the pagans and salvation has been distorted as follows (another very pointed presentation):

i) As regards the concept of the Church . . . Christendom becomes a protective shell of the Church. The Church tends to be built into the vast realm of Christian-influenced society. Christendom becomes a shock-breaker. Influences from outside are filtered; condemnations hurled at the Church are intercepted; in this well-protected area the Church can have its own style of life, speak its own language, determine its own time. The direct intercourse between Church and world has ceased. A splendid . . . isolation is possible. Life may change, but the Church in

²¹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 163.

²² *Ibid.*

this field of Christendom remains a bastion of the past, related to outworn, social structures.

ii) The Church could see, from its safe distance, . . . moral pagans and intellectual pagans. Neither of them is conceived of as heathen. The meaning of pagan is something quite different from heathen. It means something like a backward man (*paganus*), and this backwardness was generally located in his moral behaviour or in his intellectual privateering. The drunkard and the sceptic have been *the* classical objects of evangelism. And therefore, in general, our evangelistic addresses have been either disgustingly moralistic, or condescendingly apologetic. How deeply shocked we are . . . when we meet a man in total revolt who completely rejects our message. Our *Corpus Christianum* ideology has made us forget what heathen really are.

iii) To the drunkard we offered salvation as a way to a better moral rearmament, to the sceptic we offered wisdom. For the one, the forgiveness of sins meant ignoring a wild past, for the other, overlooking stupidity.²³

This is the hardest and, in its one-sided perspective, the boldest analysis of the evangelization of the past that is to be found in the ecumenical discussion. Hoekendijk's concern is to effect a breach in a particular way of thinking, of which it can justly be said that it dominates a priori, as it were, missions and evangelization alike — a fact often simply unknown or merely accepted — and accordingly perverts both. It is a matter of the radical (eschatological) "No" confronting the reality and constant danger of fusing the kingdom of God with these social factors striving toward self-sufficiency. Missions themselves, e.g., create such factors (Christian culture and its consequences for a civilization) and pastoral proclamation confirms them to the end that "the biblical correlation of Kingdom and World" can be cleared of obstacles in "a new vision of the missionary existence of the Christian Church."²⁴ In the dramatic words of Hoekendijk, ". . . evangelism actually means being engaged in the final and decisive battle between Jahweh and the Baalim."²⁵ Here

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 166–67.

²⁴ J. C. Hoekendijk, "Evangelism—The 'Raison d'Etre' of the Church," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), pp. 431–32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

is expressed nothing else than the biblical call itself. It is a call to view evangelism exclusively in terms of the biblical pattern, the gathering of the community of the Lord, who is coming in splendor. Consequently, the basis of evangelism is determined solely by the message of Jesus Christ to the world, who originates and consummates the kingdom.

Hoekendijk has laid bare the adumbration of the three major traditional missionary motives. He especially emphasizes the missionary activity of the churches directed towards those who are lost to the churches on the basis of the *Corpus Christianum* presupposition. Freytag says concerning these three missionary motives:

In all of them the dualistic tension of the biblical view of things, the consciousness of the contrast between this world and the world to come, was progressively weakened and finally broken down altogether.²⁶

It is this very fact that underlies the training and the occasionally unconscious attempt of many individuals, if not many churches, to retain the *Corpus Christianum* and to rely on it in evangelism or even to restore it with the aid of evangelistic efforts—a view with which the evangelists are at variance almost without exception. If such an attempt is made, then evangelism as such is annulled.

The call of the gospel in the world becomes in reality a call of the churches to themselves, or of the so-called Christian world to itself. The full power of the call is subverted because the kingdom of God is covertly deprived of freedom. If evangelism is not expectant evangelism, if the point of departure for evangelism is anchored in other than the eschatological intervention of the kingdom in the world, then the whole affair becomes deceitful and futile (Ps. 127: 1-2).

²⁶ Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 156.

The proscription of the apocalyptic element

In the apocalyptic conception of missions, says Freytag, it was fancied that missions "could hasten the second coming of the Lord if only the whole world could be filled with the gospel . . . Here, the kingdom of God was still only a great goal to be reached in the Beyond."²⁷ At Evanston this point initially played an important role in the discussion concerning an eschatology which would be determined in a truly christological manner. In the discussion before Willingen the point received attention especially from Warren:

We accept the contemporary situation, the history of our own time, as being all part of God's dominion. We must accept involvement in the world and do so in the spirit of the Christ incarnate and crucified.²⁸

Warren emphasizes the fact that history is no illusion, but rather the stage for God's "greatest experiment."²⁹ God's manifest assumption of lordship is, according to Warren, an event "continuous with history, not disassociated from it."³⁰ In the apocalyptic view of missions, in the attempt to flee the "wrath" to come and to escape history, Warren sees acknowledgment of God's rejection in his historical dealings with the world:

His great experiment with man comes to an end with a handful rescued from the cataclysm, and the epitaph written upon history is that it is a tale "full of sound and fury" signifying, from the point of view of divine righteousness, *nothing*.³¹

Similarly, the Report of the Advisory Commission can state:

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ M. A. C. Warren, "The Christian Mission and the Cross," *Missions under the Cross*, ed. N. Goodall, p. 28.

²⁹ M. A. C. Warren, *The Truth of the Vision: A Study in the Nature of the Christian Hope*, p. 134.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135; cf. Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 119 ff.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 402; Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, pp. 51 ff.

[The] end is not an unrelated intervention on the part of God, for which the only possible preparation would be an attempt to escape from the [wrath] to come; it is the promised climax of what God has done and still continues to do, and the true preparation for it lies in faithful living by these deeds of God."³²

Only if time is not a reality independent of the living God, the Creator and Sustainer of the world, is the tension maintained which involves the biblical view of evangelism as a great eschatological task. By shunning apocalyptic elements not only has the ecumenical discussion prevented a misunderstanding of the terminal-historical stress on eschatology, which all too easily occurs; but the discussion has also shown above all the great extent to which it regards the dawn of the kingdom which *has* come as the sole basis for its conviction about the kingdom which is to come.

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF EVANGELISM

In the ecumenical discussion the eschatological reality of evangelism has been established on the basis of Matthew 24:14.³³ This passage includes three elements:

1) The kingdom (= the kingdom of God, the lordship of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit) is the basis of evangelism in its beginning in Christ's completed work and is the goal of evangelism in its promised consummation;

2) The *time* of evangelism is the "time-span between two poles: resurrection and second coming, world reconciliation and world redemption, the invisible coming of the Kingdom and its open manifestation."³⁴

³² *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 45; cf. ¶¶ 11-12; 66.

³³ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 37 ff. Cf. J. H. Bavinck *et al.*, "Rapport uitgebracht aan de Nederlandse Zendingsraad door de Studiecommissie inzake 'de Bijbelse grondslagen van de Zending,'" *Heerban*, IV (1951), 204-5.

³⁴ Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 158.

3) The *witness* is in the *missio Dei* as a participant in the work of God and knows that "the consummation awaits our obedience to His word, "Go ye." The hope of our calling is set towards the hope of His coming."³⁵

The Kingdom

Following J. C. Hoekendijk, the conception of *Shalom*, which makes the conception of the realm of God concrete and vital, has been widely adopted in the ecumenical discussion.³⁶ Kraemer defines *Shalom* as: "... wholeness, integrity, 'Heil,' the state of complete integration of a community, its restoration into its original God-willed design."³⁷

Even Hoekendijk distinguishes *Shalom* from salvation, misunderstood as the salvation of the individual, and uncovers the broad social context of the conception. He refers to Ps. 85:11-12 in which *Shalom* is described as the meeting of "steadfast love and faithfulness, or righteousness and peace;" *Shalom* actualizes *eirene* and *soteria* in the direction of *Shalom* so regarded:³⁸

"In the New Testament, God's *Shalom* is the most elementary expression of what life in the new aeon actually is."³⁹

Evangelism then means: "Witness of *Shalom*," "Shalom for all life; destruction of all solitude, obliteration of all injustice, 'to give men a future, and hope.'"⁴⁰

Similarly, in connection with the social task of the church, the Advisory Commission regards the kingdom as "life": "truth," "freedom," "justice," and "peace."⁴¹ The Com-

³⁵ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 40, 38.

³⁶ Among others, J. H. Bavinck *et al.*, "Rapport," *op. cit.*, p. 203.

³⁷ H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Pr., 1956), p. 21.

³⁸ Hoekendijk, "Evangelism: the 'Raison d'Etre' of the Church," *op. cit.*, p. 168. Hoekendijk, "Orde, milieu, mens," *Wending*, V (1950), 296.

³⁹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 168.

⁴¹ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 114 ff.; cf. ¶ 9.

mission removes the conception of the kingdom from the abstract and static character usually attributed to it.

The new life is born in forgiveness; it finds both its pattern and its power in Jesus Christ . . . In Him a new humanity begins. To us as new men all things become new. The whole course of history is transfigured. In Christ and His community we are already sons of God and heirs of glory. . . . [Here] God has unveiled the unlimited range of His love. In Christ He has already broken down the barriers between races, nations, cultures, classes and sexes. . . . Christ came not to the righteous but to sinners, to the lost, the least, the last. . . . In His death He suffered for his enemies in loving forgiveness and thus overcame every enmity. . . .⁴²

The fulness of messianic being consists in and is expected in the "consummation of the Kingdom in which His redeeming love shall have achieved its full intention."⁴³ As for the [coming] kingdom, it is said:

The pure in heart shall see God . . . Those who are now sons of God will receive the fullness of their inheritance as joint heirs with Christ. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We shall all be changed. The dead will be raised. . . . The agony of the created world will be recognized as the travail of childbirth. Blind eyes will see, deaf ears will hear, the lame will leap for joy, the captive will be freed. The knowledge of God will cover the earth. God's people will enter into the sabbath rest, and all created things will be reconciled in the perfect communion of God with His people.⁴⁴

The church lives in the tension of this kingdom between its present revelation and its future manifestation. In this is founded the hope of the church in the double sense of hope because Christ has come and hope because he will come. This position marks the center of the work at Evanston. It is likewise the center of the work at Willingen. What was said by way of introduction concerning the categories of the ecumenical and the missionary is explained here. The rela-

⁴² *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 11, 12, 22.

⁴³ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 160.

⁴⁴ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 21.

tion of the church to the world is anchored in this position of the ecumenical discussion. The relation itself is hope in the kingdom. By this hope the church lives as the missionary church in two ways:

1) The first deed of hope "in this kingdom" is the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world,"⁴⁵ "to the ends of the earth,"⁴⁶ on the basis of the Christ-event in the kingdom which has come and which is awaited. This is the foundation of missions!

The implication of a true eschatological perspective will be missionary obedience, and the eschatology which does not issue in such obedience is a false eschatology.⁴⁷

[For] no one can have the hope and remain silent without losing it.⁴⁸

Jesus Christ is King over all the world. He died for all; and the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel is the direct consequence of His worldwide sway and all-embracing love.⁴⁹

Therefore, evangelism spans "the whole world," it is not "limited by any racial, social, national historical, or political considerations."⁵⁰ The church exists in the world through evangelism.

2) In the task consecutive to that of evangelism an "engagement in the just ordering of the world" is incorporated as the "second deed of hope."⁵¹ But this is now done in the following manner:

We do not have to proclaim the gospel to preserve the world. But we have to give ourselves to the preservation of the world insofar as many are rescued from the world through the gospel; for God preserves the

⁴⁵ E. Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ C. W. Ranson, "Weltweite Evangelisation in unseren Generation," *Christus—die Hoffnung der Welt*, pp. 138–44, in summary. Complete text in *Allgemeine Missionsnachrichten*, XXXIV (1954), 33–35; see p. 33.

⁴⁷ L. Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1953), p. 135.

⁴⁸ Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; cf. esp. ¶ 42.

⁵¹ Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 42.

world for the sake of the deliverance through the gospel . . . Evangelism does not serve this world, but rather the just order of this world serves evangelism.⁵²

We must pause at this second point. If the consequences of the ecumenical discussion concerning the questions of the Life and Work movement are cursorily examined and the results of the First Assembly at Amsterdam are scrutinized, the statements above will inevitably elicit surprise. The social task of the churches has never been regarded this way in the ecumenical discussion, not even by intimation. Rather, one is constrained to judge on the whole that the reverse has been true. The proclamation used to be aimed at the preservation of the world; and the social task of the churches was viewed correspondingly.⁵³

With a recognition of the eschatological tension of the kingdom, which is transformed into missions, all this has suddenly changed! The statements (cited above) by L. Newbigin and E. Schlink on the correlation of eschatological view and missionary obedience reveal the aspect under which the discussion on hope came to this result. The preceding comments indicate how the theological work gains if, commensurate with the main biblical emphasis, the missionary category is drawn into its core.

Time

The problem of time posed one of the greatest difficulties for the ecumenical discussion. The problems considered included: the present kingdom and the coming kingdom in their relation of tension; Christ regarded from the viewpoint of a radical eschatology as the end of history or from the viewpoint of linear *Heilsgeschichte* as the center of time seen as an uninterrupted line and determined by Christ;

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 44; cf. *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 109 ff.

⁵³ *Man's Disorder and God's Design* (New York: Harper, 1948), Vols. III and IV, *passim*.

time understood as a series of points and as a line, as vertical and horizontal; the relation of secular history to the history of salvation; the question as to the possibility of history of salvation in general within an existential-dialectical context; the problem of space and time as set by the biblical statement on the return of Christ — quite apart from the difficult question on particulars which every problem introduces individually through its philosophic implications. All these problems were discussed,⁵⁴ but without finding a solution to all these questions lying within this multi-stratified problematic. It is possible to speak of a solution only in the penetrating sense of that offered in the Report. "Sharing the Church's mission to the world, we experience both the distance and the nearness of the Kingdom."⁵⁵

The Chairman of the Advisory Commission writes: "The eschatological tension cannot be understood apart from the tension of missionary obligation."⁵⁶

As proclamation and call to decision the biblical message possesses missionary power. This point, around which the discussion revolved, exercised a centripetal force upon the configuration of urgent problems. We said the Report had to be read in a missionary context; the problem of time shows this analysis to be correct. The missionary focus of the Report consists simply in taking the biblical message seriously with its tension between what already is and what is not yet.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ A survey of the difficulties of the problem in terms of exegesis and biblical theology is offered in W. Schweitzer, "The Meaning of Hope in the Bible," *passim*. Schweitzer groups the dogmatic and ethical problems in *Eschatology and Ethics*, *passim*. Cf. *Missions under the Cross*, ed. N. Goodall, pp. 20 ff. The most important positions are presented with a view to the ecumenical discussion in R. Morgenthaler, *Kommendes Reich* (Zuerich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1952). The result of the presentation: "Christological eschatology," p. 112. Cf. O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1951). W. A. Whitehouse, "The Modern Discussion of Eschatology," *Eschatology: Four Papers Read to the Society for the Study of Theology*.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 19.

⁵⁶ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 141.

⁵⁷ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 7.

The Report of the Advisory Commission makes it unmistakably clear that this biblical tension may under no circumstances be dissolved one-sidedly, but rather must be recognized in its significance for missions:

The Kingdom that is now real moves with God's power and faithfulness towards its full realization in the manifestation of God's glory throughout all creation. The King reigns; therefore He will reign until He has put all enemies under his feet. When the Lord's Apostles asked him whether the Kingdom would not come at once, He answered, "Ye shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth." To our cry, "Lord, how long," He answers, "Go and preach the Gospel to all nations."⁵⁸

Paul S. Minear said at Willingen:

In the end, every eye shall see His Glory. In the interim, the work of the Church is valid only to the extent that it demonstrates this basic truth; Christ is now the head of every principality and power, the Lord of all Lords in heaven and on earth.⁵⁹

In these statements on the biblical (eschatological) conception of time, the message of evangelism is fundamentally determined. The message is the work of Christ completed openly in his revealed (hidden) kingdom and completed in expectation of his promised (manifest) kingdom. In itself this message is just as much in tension as the time creating and characterizing it: "What we hope for is the fullness of what we already possess in Him; what we possess has its meaning only in the hope for His coming."⁶⁰

The content of the message determines the time of evangelism; it is *the time of the end*.⁶¹ At that time the situation of the proclaiming congregation is "comparable to that of an army which knows that parachute troops have already landed behind the enemy,"⁶² and which is "firmly embraced

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 20, 41.

⁵⁹ P. S. Minear, "The Covenant and the Great Commission," *Missions under the Cross*, p. 76.

⁶⁰ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 38.

⁶² W. Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 158.

by the victory of Christ"⁶³ in view of "the Kingdom of God which has invisibly come on the expectation of its visible coming."⁶⁴ The time of the end also determines the tension of evangelism: "God's patience is the explanation of this final period."⁶⁵ The end is the "pause in the history of salvation,"⁶⁶ which is given the churches for the prosecution of their apostolic mission to the world."⁶⁷

The statements in the discussion vigorously drive toward this point.⁶⁸ As for the singular quality of the time of the kingdom and of the gospel in view of the place and the eschatological urgency of evangelism, it was emphasized that:

God brings the world to its fulfillment through the missions of the Church.⁶⁹

Without the Christian mission, history is nothing but human history, the progress of which at its highest consists in the climax of its catastrophes.⁷⁰

The powers of the coming Kingdom are already at work in the world in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit poured out upon His people.⁷¹

The time of evangelism will not last forever . . . the time of expectation is the time of evangelism.⁷²

This time—so every contribution to the discussion means to assert—is not just any time, but the time of the messianic activity of God in Jesus Christ. It is the time in which God lays hold of history with a view to its end. Its meaning is that the world is being filled with the gospel and that under

⁶³ Schlink, "Die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁶⁴ Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶⁷ Ranson, "Weltweite Evangelisation . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 33; Bavinck *et al.*, "Rapport," *op. cit.*, pp. 202, 205.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 23, 43.

⁶⁹ Ranson, "Weltweite Evangelisation . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁷⁰ Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁷¹ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 11.

⁷² *The Evanston Report*, p. 107.

the lordship of God his congregation is being gathered in the obedience of faith. The quality of this time qualifies the churches for the world.

Little by little the plea permeated the discussion that the churches might recognize this time and place themselves unreservedly at its disposal in order to meet the task of this time, which is now and always a present fact in Jesus Christ, i.e., really to be his Church in the work of evangelism. In this time "lies the uncompleted task of world-evangelism."⁷³

Witness

Witnessing is discussed under the dominant viewpoint of hope and with regard to kingdom and time. Eschatologically the witness is a partner of the "Faithful Witness" (Rev. 1:5). The witness stands in hope of the kingdom, which he receives from the Lord of the kingdom.⁷⁴ To hope means to wait with "ardent longing . . . yet patiently, because we know [the object of our hope] can never disappoint us."⁷⁵ Patience and zeal, trust and urgency, waiting and hastening are rooted in hope of the kingdom.⁷⁶ In this hope the witness knows that "God [has] already made the world subject to Christ." The witness proclaims him "who is already Lord of the world."⁷⁷ Accordingly, witness (evangelism) is nothing else but "participation in the work of God . . . which He is doing all the time and everywhere."⁷⁸ The preaching of the gospel to the world means to be employed in messianic service, i.e., in the eschatological work of the ascended and returning Lord. This has an extraordinary and exclusive

⁷³ Ranson, "Weltweite Evangelisation . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁷⁴ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶ 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶ 3, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, ¶ 23.

⁷⁷ Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁷⁸ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶ 37. This is more precise and more secure against possible misunderstanding than the phrase of Willigen, "continuance of His mission" (*Missions under the Cross*, p. 189).

meaning: "There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world."⁷⁹ This sentence is a core of the ecumenical discussion.

The following important quotations characterize the service of the witness under and with his Lord:

This ministry is the ministry of the risen and ascended Christ: Christ as He is today. It is the ministry of Christ's life on earth by which God is revealed as the Father. It is the ministry of His death on the Cross by which the sin of the world is taken away. It is the ministry of His resurrection by which the powers of death and evil have been decisively defeated. It is the ministry of the heavenly Intercessor who does not will that any should perish. It is the ministry of the coming Christ by whose mercy and judgment the world is governed even now.⁸⁰

This is why a disciple cannot drink of Christ's covenant without proclaiming the Lord's death. The Word is proclaimed from Golgotha. It is proclaimed wherever the Eucharist is celebrated. It is proclaimed in baptism, and in the whole sequence of deaths to sin which comprise baptism. It is proclaimed wherever the cup of suffering is made the source of joy and hope. Men proclaim the covenant by being its sons; by the *exousia* over demons, by forgiveness given to enemies, "in afflictions . . . distresses . . . labours . . . by pureness . . . by love unfeigned, by the word of truth . . . by the power of God" (II Cor. 4-7); by becoming poor that others may be enriched, by bearing the sins of others so that they may become God's righteousness, by dying for all, so that they might live no longer for themselves . . . and the Lord's death is proclaimed until He comes.⁸¹

Solidarity with Him requires and produces solidarity through Him with the world in its transiency, futility, sin, and death.⁸²

The witness, sharing "Christ's compassion for all mankind"⁸³ and treading the road "He trod,"⁸⁴ clings to "Him who has been crucified, the Deliverer from the bonds of this world."⁸⁵ Not only is He the criterion for the witness; only from the

⁷⁹ *Missions under the Cross*, p. 190.

⁸⁰ *The Evanston Report*, p. 99.

⁸¹ Minear, "The Covenant and the Great Commission," *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

⁸² *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 41.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶ 108.

⁸⁵ Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 39.

cross "can [He] offer in word and deed a sure and steadfast hope."⁸⁶ "It is the crucified Lord who is the hope of the world."⁸⁷

The witness is now able to proclaim:

His kingdom is coming. It is He, the King, who confronts us. We face not a trackless waste of unfilled time with an end that none can dare to predict; we face our living Lord, our Judge and Saviour. He who was dead and is alive for evermore, He who has come and is coming and will reign for ever and ever. It may be that we face tribulation; indeed we must certainly face it if we would be partakers with Him. But we know His word, His kingly word: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."⁸⁸

The witness is considered to be one who "is set in the perspective not simply of obedience to a task, but of a glorious eschatological hope."⁸⁹ "In very truth we cannot know the fulness of God's salvation until all for whom it is intended share it with us. We without them cannot be made whole."⁹⁰

The witness always works on the assumption that "... it is He who is the Evangelist, the Messiah who ... is gathering the nations."⁹¹

In such a witness evangelism becomes a reality.

GATHERING THE CONGREGATION (CONCLUSIONS)

The bases of the biblical view of evangelism have been developed under the aspects of the kingdom (as *Shalom*, the time (as the end), and the witness (as the participant in the *missio Dei*). The inquiry must now be more precisely directed toward the goal or meaning of evangelism.

W. Freytag writes:

⁸⁶ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶ 108.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶ 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 6.

⁸⁹ R. A. Nelson, "Mission and Eschatology," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 149.

⁹⁰ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶ 40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 39.

Preaching the gospel has the sole purpose of gathering the community which waits for the Lord. The community is formed which accepts as its Lord the Christ who has come, which is baptized into His death and which lives in Him a new and different life. And at the same time this gathering of the community does not have its purpose in itself, but rather in the fact that the message of the Lord who is to come goes through all nations as a witness to the day on which only the children of the Kingdom shall escape destruction. In that sense the Christian mission is a witness of the Kingdom which has come to that which is still to come.⁹²

M. A. C. Warren and J. C. Hoekendijk share in this statement:

Any effective presentation of the Church's primary task of evangelism in the world of our time must surely depend upon the nature of its hope . . . we need to note that the nature of that hope will largely determine the character of that evangelism.⁹³

Evangelism can be nothing but the realization of hope, a function of expectancy.⁹⁴

The following is implied by these words and is consequently insured against any other interpretation:

- 1) Evangelism is not propaganda;
- 2) The goal of evangelism is neither the propagation of the church nor the establishment of new churches;
- 3) Evangelism is devoid of striving for demonstrable success.

The rejection of propaganda

J. C. Hoekendijk speaks of a "total rejection of everything that tends to be propaganda."⁹⁵ In conjunction with Martin Kaehler, he sees propaganda as a practice of missionaries or evangelists who do not know or disregard their ministry

⁹² Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁹³ Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, p. 57; also cited in Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

of the Lord, who proclaims himself through men — the practice of disseminating a doctrine intending solely “to make man in *his* [the missionary’s] image and after his likeness”:

For example, do we really hope, and can we really expect, that God can give another than a Lutheran, or a Reformed, or an Anglican body to the seed which we sow? Do we not act as if God has thought out already all forms in which He may shape His Shalom? And is not this confessional propaganda almost without exception the form in which our evangelization is concealed?⁹⁶

W. Freytag says the same thing with biblical encouragement:

All preaching of the Gospel is a step towards something new. . . . Of the proclamation of the Gospel something new always comes into being. There always comes into being another church.⁹⁷

Freedom for this other church is of emphatic importance for the question, closely allied to that of evangelism, regarding the structure of the local congregation. Such freedom comes to the witness when he is nothing more than an obedient instrument by the grace of the Lord, who wills the new creation and before whom the church must regard itself as provisional. The gathering of the community is the task of the Messiah. Evangelism is *his* privilege!

The rejection of propagating the church and establishing new churches as the goal of evangelism

In the context of the ecumenical discussion this does not mean that evangelism is not at liberty to assume the work of planting new churches, much less that evangelism is to have nothing to do with the existing church. It was correctly maintained at Evanston “that no evangelism is Christian that does not issue in corporate membership of the Church.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.

⁹⁷ W. Freytag, “Mission and Unity,” *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 408–09.

⁹⁸ *The Evanston Report*, pp. 47–48.

Rather, a warning is given here, in connection with the rejection of the *Corpus Christianum* conception and of missions conceived simply as the "distance from church to church," not to separate the goal and meaning of evangelism from the proclamation of the kingdom, and thus, not to restrict them. Hoekendijk especially deals with this point:

It is the outgoing activity of one church—it can remain as it was before—to a place in the world where again a church is planted. In principle, the task of missions is completed as soon as this church exists. . . .⁹⁹

The Dutch report was concerned to insure that the planting of the church be not mistaken for the gathering of the nations through God.¹⁰⁰ Hoekendijk says:

Evangelism and churchification are not identical When Christian hope, the partaking of the coming Kingdom, has really to determine the character of our evangelism, it is impossible to think of the *plantatio ecclesiae* as the end of evangelism.¹⁰¹

The Anglican, M. A. C. Warren, who defines the church as "brotherhood of expectancy,"¹⁰² sees the aim of evangelism in the kingdom — and thus makes the aim a high one: "Preparation for the coming of the King and the triumph of His Kingdom."¹⁰³

Planting the church is a necessary undertaking for evangelism. However, it can only be understood as meaning that the church originates through the proclamation — but can also originate in an entirely different manner. Planting the church, though, is never the aim or meaning of evangelism, which instead consists in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

⁹⁹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁰ Bavinck, "Rapport," *op. cit.*, p. 209; cf. p. 220.

¹⁰¹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁰² Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, p. 156.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

This understanding of evangelism directs a question to the Report of Section II of the Second Assembly: Is the eschatological orientation of evangelism, which was clearly represented in the Report of the Advisory Commission, fully applied in the following sentences?

What then are the concerns of evangelism? One is surely so to proclaim the gospel that it will transform the groupings and patterns of society . . . to the end that human institutions and structures may more nearly conform to the divine intention and respect the limiting prerogative of God. Still another aspect of evangelism is the attempt to bring people into the full life of the Church . . .¹⁰⁴

The question as to the eschatological orientation of these lines must be asked because behind them a call to evangelize under the catchword, "Evangelize or perish!" seems to be heard, which is nothing other than an expression of anxiety over the steadily diminishing might of the church due to the growth of the (pagan) masses and to the secularism they represent. If it is "Evangelize or perish!," then evangelism of a church is nothing but an attempt at self-endorsement—and therefore no longer evangelism.

The refusal to rely upon success \angle

On this point the Report of Section II is strong and clear:

The Church in its work of evangelism is delivered from bondage to visible results. The gospel is preached because the Lord is risen and the age of the Messiah begun and "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet."¹⁰⁵

The Advisory Commission reports: "Our evangelism is not to be determined by the likelihood of immediate response. It is to be determined by the nature of the Gospel itself."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *The Evanston Report*, p. 101. Violently criticized in *Response to Evanston* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1957), p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁶ *Report of the Advisory Commission* . . . , ¶ 43.

At this juncture it is necessary to recall our earlier discussion. We may best proceed with an eye to the theme of Willingen, "The missionary duty of the church," a theme which was very broadly conceived and was actually envisaged to have practical application. A great number of the participants in the Willingen Assembly as well as the originators of this theme regarded it as making the existence of the church both the basis of missions and the key to the understanding of mission. Wilhelm Andersen has consistently and correctly pointed out that this approach to missions is completely mistaken; and that the difficulties of the discussion at Willingen are rooted precisely in this mistaken approach.¹⁰⁷ At Willingen this misconception was manifested; and in the course of the discussion of Evanston it was seen why this was theologically wrong.

If missions, like missionary preaching in general, are based on the church, then in the end — in spite of all preaching of Christ — missions become a matter of the propagation of the church. And that means "of the churches." Consequently, as practical experience shows, missions then turn into a process of transplanting churches in their historical peculiarity. In fact missions — in spite of all preaching of Christ — are then actually perverted into expansion of the culture and civilization of those countries in which the churches have a wide penetration and in which they have shared in the creation of culture and civilization. In such missions, therefore, precisely the same thing takes place that has occurred in the churches that have this conception of missions. The message is *de facto* identified with the precipitate of the message in a definite historical, i.e., conjointly sociological form of the church. Moreover, in this aeon the precipitate always remains problematical because always broken by disobedience. In view of such considerations it is understandable how strongly and persistently the complex

¹⁰⁷ Andersen, *Toward a Theology of Missions*, *passim*.

of the *Corpus Christianum* has been at work as a presupposition in missions. Against this conception is directed the main attack which has been carried out in the ecumenical discussion upon this understanding of missions and missionary preaching.

In the practical experience of missions, though, something else has simultaneously emerged to which W. Freytag has called attention. Among the most varying conceptions of missions, covering the entire width of activity beginning with that of the Roman Catholic church down to the Pentecostals, there is found but one fruit that prospers, namely, that of the proclamation of Christ. And this prospers in spite of atrophy and distortion and stimulates faith and new life despite expansion of churches, despite rigid theology, despite domestic opposition to a church or theology, and despite cultures and ways of life bound to particular civilizations.

When this is recognized, missionary science is confronted with the mystery both of the Lord of mission and of his kingdom. Such knowledge generates humility.

This double experience makes the testimony of the Holy Scripture shine the more brightly. On the one hand, the utter abyss is seen which threatens missions when misunderstood and which they lean toward or even fall into. At precisely this point, on the other hand, a fact appears which, even if scantily or entirely concealed here and there, missions have always believed: the path taken in missions ends some place other than where it ought properly to end.

For missionary science this constitutes the theological statement which deals with the *missio Dei* and which supplies the basis of missions.

Such a point of departure has marked ecumenical discussion and guaranteed its outcome. In short, due to its leaders the discussion has been carried on within a two-sided context. On one side, there is the tension between missions as propagation and missions as the preaching of Christ. On the

other side, there is the question, which has become more precisely defined, of the biblical statement on missions and evangelism. If this is clear, then enough has been said to recognize the significance which the discussion assigns to the eschatological basis of missions.

2. THE CHURCH AS SEEN FROM THE ASPECT OF MISSIONS

The picture of the church has been broadly sketched primarily from the aspect of eschatology. Now the task is to attempt the development of an ecclesiology within the ecumenical discussion. In its future course the discussion must turn to such an attempt in dealing with most of its questions.

At this juncture it is necessary to repeat that the outstanding feature of the statements on the church in the Report of the Advisory Commission is the missionary aspect under which the church is seen — with the point of departure seen from the eschatological aspect. It immediately becomes apparent how “hope” as the point of departure led to the determination of the church within the category of missionary thought, although initially this had not been the goal of the Commission.

We shall confine ourselves to repeating the most important statements in the Report of the Advisory Commission, in which a series of statements from the discussions at Willingen and Lund re-echo.

The chapter on the church is entitled “Christ and His People.” The first section designates the church as the “pilgrim people of God”;¹⁰⁸ The second section comments on “the church’s mission”¹⁰⁹ in conjunction with the unity, renewal, and triumph of the church. The Report deliberately gives one-sided emphasis to the formulations dealing with the task of the church as a “body of intercessory action” and

¹⁰⁸ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶¶ 27 ff.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 37 ff.

as the "vanguard of a Kingdom that cannot be shaken":¹¹⁰ The church is the "People which He has called into being to be the bearer of hope, the sign and witness of God's mighty acts, the means of His working, and the field wherein His glory is to be revealed."¹¹¹

The same emphasis also appears quite plainly in the summary of the Report: "To testify to the world concerning the world's hope is the meaning of the church's existence in every age and clime, and the purpose of all we have said."¹¹²

In its being directed to the world, in its witness of the hope, is found the church's eschatological "dignity and responsibility."¹¹³

The parts of the Report which are relevant here are summarized in the following paragraphs.

THE CHURCH AS THE INSTRUMENT OF CHRIST'S COMMISSION

The church lives as the body of the risen Lord; and "the same spirit who was in Jesus Christ was poured out upon His People."¹¹⁴ The members of the body are "members of Christ, united with Him and at His disposal."¹¹⁵ The "extension of His earthly ministry"¹¹⁶ is committed to these members through identification with "Christ [by] carrying upon their hearts the burden of the world's sin and sorrow"¹¹⁷ and by hoping "for all those whom He loves"¹¹⁸ "while history lasts":¹¹⁹ "In proclaiming the Gospel [the Church] is permitted to engage in God's own work of bringing His purpose to fulfilment."¹²⁰

¹¹⁰ Minear, "The Covenant and the Great Commission," *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹¹¹ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 27.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, ¶ 128.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 129.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶ 12.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶ 32.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶ 14.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 22.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 36.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶ 30.

In this ministry the church is "a pilgrim people"¹²¹ "pressing on towards the moment at which the Lord who died and rose again will confront them in His power and glory,"¹²² a pilgrim people living "with loins girt and lamps burning."¹²³

It is the "Church of Hope."¹²⁴ "The Church thus becomes, in the first place, witness and evidence of that which God has done, and the sign of that which He is doing and will yet do."¹²⁵

The church which does not comply with this ministry "does not merely fail in one function; it denies its own nature."¹²⁶

THE CHURCH AS NEW HUMANITY

As the body of the risen Lord, placed in the world, the church lives "by the proclamation of the Gospel, by worship and sacraments, and by its fellowship in the Holy Spirit."¹²⁷

In worship and sacraments it participates in the life of the heavenly fatherland. In the fellowship of the Spirit it receives divine powers of growth, renewal, and enlightenment to which we cannot place a limit.¹²⁸ In the church the coming new creation is already a present reality.¹²⁹

The "already" of the new humanity, though, is in tension with the "not yet." The church is a divided church; and the "divided state of the Church" cripples the proclamation of the one hope.¹³⁰ This divided condition and the vexatious realization that the proclamation is weak¹³¹ must lead to the repentance of the members of the body.¹³²

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 15.

¹²² *Ibid.*, ¶ 29.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 23.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶ 130.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶ 31.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, ¶ 41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶ 30.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹³⁰ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 49.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 43.

¹³² *Ibid.*, ¶ 34.

"Humility and constant self-examination are a necessary part of the climate of the Church's life."¹³³

"The Church's visible structure passes."¹³⁴ The time of the church in this age is provisional. The church walks "through thick darkness."¹³⁵ In this way the future comes to be unhampered:

The Church which thus lets itself be conquered by its Lord has part also in this conquest of this world. It is permitted even to help God to win the victory. Where His word is preached and heard, where consciences are first rebuked and then consoled, where the proud are humbled and the despairing lifted up, where the parched ground of dead hearts is changed by the quickening Spirit into a garden yielding fruit to the glory of God, there the Church celebrates the triumph of its Lord; there by faith it triumphs with Him.¹³⁶

This is just the point at which the church stands, earnestly "waiting upon God's quickening Spirit,"¹³⁷ remaining open for renewal through God, growing as the body of Christ, and capable of evangelism until the goal is reached, namely, entrance into "the glory of the Kingdom of God":

Here at last the true meaning and purpose of its mission will be realized, for all kindreds of mankind will be brought in. Here at last the Church will know fully what it is to be one in Christ.¹³⁸

Here, in the fulfilment of its commission, the church is the new humanity, from which no one is lacking. The Church lives in Christ. Its goal, therefore, lies not in itself! The church is *eschatological* in character. It is held in the tension of the *hope* and embarked on the path of *pilgrimage*.¹³⁹

¹³³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 54.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, ¶ 62.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, ¶ 61.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, ¶ 59.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ¶ 57.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, ¶ 62.

¹³⁹ These statements in the Report of the Advisory Commission underlie an address given by R. L. Calhoun, a member of the Commission, at Oberlin in 1957, entitled "Christ and the Church," in *The Nature of the Unity We Seek. Official Report of the North American Conference on Faith and Order, September 3-10, 1957, Oberlin, Ohio*, ed. P. S. Minear (St. Louis: Bethany Pr., 1958), pp. 52-78. In my opinion this work is the most profound and consistent to be found on the church from an ecumenical viewpoint.

We can break off here. It was seen that the question of the church was subjoined to that of the message and basis of evangelism. For evangelism the question of the church arises as the theological problem of the *execution of evangelism*. The points to the second of the great questions of the discussion, which must be developed in Part II. Its object will be to demonstrate the basic importance of the brief Evanston statements for the question of the church in the discussion on evangelism (evangelization).

▲

PART TWO

The Church — Situation and Action

“We need to hear the New Testament message of renewal with its all-pervading eschatological perspective.”

W. A. Visser 't Hooft,
The Renewal of the Church, p. 99.

IV

The Ecumenical Movement as a Movement of Repentance on the Part of the Churches

In the final analysis the ecumenical movement will never be understood, if not as a movement of repentance on the part of the churches. This means, of course, that the real point of the ecumenical discussion is missed if elaboration of the discussion fails to advance to this view. In fact, this may easily occur, and does occur time and again in reports on the ecumenical discussion as well as in the appropriation of its formulations. It is obvious that on the whole we have been restricted to a highly inadequate picture of the ecumenical discussion theologically and that we find painfully few traces of the truly ecumenical in the churches.

This basic understanding of the ecumenical movement is best discovered in the ecumenical discussion on the churches' evangelism. In the course of the discussion it has been noted time and again how the church falls short in the task of evangelism and how a revolution in the life of the church requires fulfilment of the missionary task. Statements pointing in both these directions dominate the discussion to such an extent that H. Lilje could rightly say:

In the new ecumenical deliberations concerning evangelism it is not only a matter of new working methods and practical advice; but, in an unforeseen manner, the question as to the nature of the church has also arisen for discussion.¹

The question of the *church* is the central question in the ecumenical discussion on evangelism! The call to repentance

¹ H. Lilje, "Evangelisation in oekumenische Sicht," *Sammlung und Sendung. Vom Auftrag der Kirche in der Welt. Eine Festgabe fuer D. Heinrich Rendtorff*, ed. J. Heubach and H. H. Ulrich (Berlin, 1958), p. 210.

will be recognized if an attempt is made to understand the statements on this question. They are sharply defined, but apparently lack ecclesiological concern; they are consistent, but apparently make a destructive demand for thoroughgoing change. These features must be taken into account if the statements on the question of the church are to be understood. If the call to repentance is kept in mind, then not only will the discussion on evangelism be grasped at its core, but the ecumenical discussion will also be plainly understood in terms of what supplies its impetus and goal.

RENEWAL OF THE CHURCHES: PILGRIMAGE

In the ecumenical movement the question of the church is the question of its renewal. This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. The unity of the churches and their service to and in the world are most closely bound to the renewal of the churches. In the ecumenical discussion, service and unity presuppose renewal. Renewal is expected in the performance of service and on the path to unity: "Without advance there can be no renewal: without renewal there can be no advance."²

If viewed aright, "the pietistic ideal of conversion has not been transmitted to the church itself" along with the call to repentance for the sake of renewal. In contrast, the biblical call to repentance recalls "with vigor the church's sole ground of life as *creatura Verbi*"³ and the Word as the power of God in Jesus Christ, which provides the basis for the church and carries it toward its goal. This fact introduces "a fundamental concern of reformation theology," "namely, the recognition that the *viva vox evangelii*, the Word of Christ, when

² J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1949), 136.

³ E. Wolf, "'Erneuerung der Kirche' im Lichte der Reformation," *Evangelische Theologie*, VI (1946), 331, 320.

performed, preached, and proclaimed, is the genuine function of the church's life."⁴

Reconsideration is now in order of the preceding elaborations and especially of the statements, referred to at the end of Part One, in which the Report of the Advisory Commission treats of the church. Now it will be seen more clearly why it has been necessary to speak initially of the message and basis of evangelism from the eschatological viewpoint which has broken into the discussion. The necessity grew not simply out of systematic grounds, but primarily out of the ecumenical discussion itself.

Closely related to the foregoing, the reason for placing the statements on the church in a missionary context in the discussion also becomes clear. The church "can be rightly understood only in an eschatological perspective."⁵ The bold strokes with which the picture of the church is drawn in the Report of the Advisory Commission describe two profiles, of which only the first is perceptibly delineated. The first profile sharply separates the biblical-eschatological view of the church from the historical fact of the institutionalized churches and relativizes the element of the churches' inclination toward institutionalism. This element covertly affects the ecumenical discussion primarily on the question of faith and order. In the churches' inclination toward institutionalism, according, e.g., to K. Barth, "the vital current passing and repassing between the Lord and His congregation is blocked by man's sin," and in the place of the church "which is no longer a church . . . the phenomenon of the nominal church" appears.⁶ The determination with which — if we may borrow an Amsterdam expression on the ecumenical movement — "the movement away from all churchism and

⁴ Lilje, "Evangelisation in oekumenische Sicht," *op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁵ L. Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 135.

⁶ K. Barth, "The Church—the Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, I, 71.

toward Jesus Christ"⁷ was pursued, conformably to the church situation, is reflected in the other [positive] profile. An attempt was made to bring this profile into sharper focus; and on the basis of this profile, the work must now continue.

The Report of the Advisory Commission interprets the church, understood from a strictly eschatological viewpoint, as a "pilgrim people." In the most recent works of three influential participants in the discussion, this phrase is underscored and emphasized in rather lengthy arguments (S. C. Neill, D. T. Niles, J. A. Mackay):

[Jesus Christ] appointed His Church to be always a pilgrim Church.⁸ The Church needs today to recover this experience of pilgrimage in the land of promise. The meek shall inherit the earth, but there can be no premature taking possession.⁹

The Church must become afresh a pilgrim Church and engage in a new Abrahamic adventure . . . , [a] pilgrim, missionary Church, which subordinates everything in its heritage to the fulfilment of its mission.¹⁰

If the implications of these three representative contributions are made explicit, they declare: Only in the pilgrimage of the churches can the promise be laid hold of, the promise by which and in which the churches live; only in pilgrimage is it possible actually to be the church. The renewal of the church is bound to the churches' consent to pilgrimage.

If this is taken seriously, then a liberating view for the churches results. Amid every genuine obligation to what has come to be and amid every justification of what is, free-

⁷ K. Barth, "Die Unordnung der Welt und Gottes Heilsplan," *Amsterdamer Dokumente. Berichte und Reden auf der Weltkirchenkonferenz in Amsterdam 1948* (Bethel, 1948), p. 142.

⁸ S. C. Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Edinburgh House Pr., 1957), p. 19.

⁹ D. T. Niles, *In the Beginning. Biblical Essays Based on the Book of Genesis* (London, 1958), p. 64.

¹⁰ J. A. Mackay, "The Christian Mission at this Hour," in *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, Ghana, Dec. 28, 1957-Jan. 8, 1958* (London: International Missionary Council, 1958), p. 124; similarly even in 1947: J. A. Mackay, "With Christ to the Frontier," *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World*, ed. C. W. Ranson, p. 203.

dom can now prevail; and, in the hope for Jesus Christ, can now properly prevail for the first time. It is the churches' freedom from their own fixed posture. Through pilgrimage the path of the churches is opened before them.

In the ecumenical discussion of evangelism it was this very view of the church and the first steps in the pilgrimage of the churches that were particularly contended for. The general emphasis on this point is explained by the close engagement with the reality of the churches which is experienced at every step in evangelism. Through this emphasis, though, a primary and very important element of freedom is elaborated — as is yet to be seen. In such freedom, which resounds from the gospel, the renewal of the churches is announced as a gift of God. It is freedom from the useless and even obstructive historical stagnation of the churches in their socio-structural forms. If one wishes to discourse on the renewal of the churches, that is, in a truly theological manner, in its relationship to the reality of the *missio Dei*, one must take note especially of this phase of the discussion.

A question now arises which is determinative for subsequent remarks. Should not the statement on the church and the churches with respect to the discussion on evangelism receive the greatest attention in, yes, even become the center of, the whole ecumenical discussion? — quite apart from the fact that ecumenical interest within the churches would have to focus on this very question anyway!

If this were done, the character of the movement of repentance would be more acutely grasped and the question of the renewal of the churches would be more sharply defined. Secondly, greater clarity would ensue as to what it means for the churches to be founded on the Word, to live by the Word in the world as it is, and to be in the service of the kingdom which is proclaimed in the Word. Thirdly, the character of the churches as servants would be more fully manifested, and with it their being directed to the Lord, who is gathering

his congregation throughout the world with a view to his coming. Finally, and precisely on the basis, perhaps, of the provocative features in the discussion, what was theologically achieved at Evanston would be more thoroughly realized. H. Thielicke had already written for the discussion at Amsterdam: "If the church strives for the kingdom of God — and not just to capture men with a new method of preaching — everything else will accrue to it, 'men,' 'workers,' and 'youths.'" ¹¹

Likewise, H. Böhm says:

Today all renewal of the church and the congregation is comprehended in the radical shift from the secularized popular and social church to the image of the New Testament congregation, which is the aim of the conception of *congregatio*.¹²

The question of the renewal of the church is the main feature of the discussion on evangelism, which has to be understood on this basis. Here alone will power for a breakthrough be found.

EVENT (THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS) WITHIN INSTITUTION

The question as to the priority of event or institution or of an adjustment of the two was broached in the ecumenical discussion especially after the founding of the World Council of Churches, and has not been satisfactorily resolved to the present day.¹³ The question, as it has been put, must be ac-

¹¹ H. Thielicke, "Versagen und Erneuerung der kirchlichen Verkündigung," in *Amsterdamer oekumenisches Gespräch VI: Deutsche Beiträge* (Stuttgart, 1948), p. 68.

¹² H. Böhm, "Neue Wege der Kirche," in *Amsterdamer oekumenisches Gespräch VI: Deutsche Beiträge*, p. 56.

¹³ Cf. W. G. Muelder, "Institutionalism in Relation to Unity and Disunity," *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, ed. P. S. Minear, pp. 90-102. "Study Commission on Institutionalism," *Commission on Faith and Order: Minutes of the Commission and the Working Committee July 1957*, New Haven (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1958), p. 28.

cepted for the present as irresolvable. Of course, a church can describe for itself what it is and what it intends to be, and can assert that in describing these things for itself it has given a description of the church. The fact is, though, that this description would always be empirically limited, and so lack "universal" validity. It is important to remember that until the sixteenth century there was no definition of the church, that even in the *Summa* of Aquinas only rather casual remarks on the church occur, and that even in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods there is no comprehensive definition of the church. The inconclusiveness of the doctrine of the church in both the Lutheran and the Calvinistic branches of the Reformation makes itself conspicuous throughout the entire question of institution and event. But it probably indicates also that the church of Jesus Christ can only be sketchily described when regarded biblically, and in the most important places can only be described allusively.¹⁴ Every statement by Christ yields, as it were, a strong vertical picture, but the horizontal picture which is needed in this analysis cannot fully be achieved. The churches are not self-sufficient. They are provisional.

The problem of institution and event chiefly includes the following aspects:

- 1) Ecumenical-ecclesiological: Two types of churches are encountered. One ("catholic") is constituted as a church, *cum grano salis*, by the continuity of ecclesiastical functions. The other ("protestant," "evangelical"), by contrast, lives principally and directly by Holy Scripture.
- 2) Churchly-pietistic: Two conceptions of the congregation are encountered. One is institutional-sacramental (the worshipping congregation), the other is spontaneous-

¹⁴ E. Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche. Grundzuege des evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchenverstaendnisses* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1958). Bibliography in Kinder's book. G. MacGregor, *Corpus Christi* (London: Macmillan, 1959).

verbal (the witnessing congregation). On the one hand, they are in general static; on the other, they are above all missionary.

At first sight, nearly all the participants in the ecumenical discussion on evangelism appear to be representatives of the viewpoint which approaches church and congregation in terms of event. A glance at the list of participants in the discussion shows that only a very few members of the orthodox churches took part in the discussion. Most of the Anglicans represent the evangelical tendency of the Anglican communion. The understanding of the church as event appears to have manifested itself most strongly with H. Kraemer and J. C. Hoekendijk, who led the discussion of this question together.

This initial impression, however, is deceptive because it misses an essential factor; and the deception leads to an unintended simplification of the best fruits of the discussions. Of the many factors contributing to this deception, the primary are the lack of ecclesiological precision and the challenge, often quite pressing, of the institutional element. Deception especially was due to viewing institution and event, decisively foreshortened, in the sense of their mutual exclusiveness. Accordingly, neither the problem nor the biblical reality was done justice. But, in view of an early statement by L. Newbigin, the main feature for H. Kraemer and J. C. Hoekendijk in this discussion can be clearly seen:

The Christian believer . . . is connected with Christ . . . by nineteen centuries of Church history, as a member in the Society which Christ instituted, and to which He entrusted his saving work. And he is connected with Him as the living and ascended Lord, present where two or three are gathered together in His Name, meeting the soul here and now in the Word and Sacraments of the Gospel.¹⁵

¹⁵ L. Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church* (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 71.

Only when this is insured and taken seriously and only when both institution and event are not expected to dismiss the historical factor in the church can it be said that for both the accent indubitably rests on the character of the church as event. But this is the case only if it means that, in view of the *present situation of the churches* in relation to their biblical definition, the event is stressed and called for (existentially) *within* the institution (the rather emphatic approach of H. Kraemer), or that the institution is placed within the framework of the event (the viewpoint chiefly of J. C. Hoekendijk).¹⁶

Throughout the discussion on evangelism, the *notae ecclesiae* and especially their relation to the world have been sought in pursuing the question of the church (always against the background of the churches). Regarding the Word, the discussion is basically of one accord; regarding the sacraments, the discussion must of necessity wait until the ecumenical movement has advanced far enough to approach this problem in all its ramifications; regarding office, the discussion has dissociated itself from the confessional controversy. It is clear, though, that the *notae ecclesiae*, however understood among the churches, are directed toward the world. The church as the "instrument to gather the scattered children of God"¹⁷—a decision lying theologically beyond the problem of institution and event—is church for the world (John 3:16; II Kings 5:19). The church exists through Word and sacrament; it exists through prophetic as well as priestly service (Phil. 2). The *signum ecclesiae* is *service*. This indicates the direction

¹⁶ The problem is regarded along the same lines by W. Nicholls in "The Ecumenical Movement and the Doctrine of the Church," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 31 ff. (Nicholls is "high-church" Anglican), and by P. Maury, "Evangelism—The Mission of the Church to those Outside Her Life," *Ecumenical Review*, VII (1954), 31. It is clear that especially with the Orthodox churches the discussion still has a long way to go with respect to this viewpoint—indeed, in actuality it has yet to begin.

¹⁷ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Various Meanings of Unity and the Unity which the World Council of Churches Seeks to Promote," *Ecumenical Review*, VIII (1955), p. 27.

followed by the discussion as it daringly moves through the problem of institution and event, namely, the all-pervading question regarding the *obedience* of the churches to the precept of *being church*.¹⁸ In this inquiry the confinement of the churches in Jesus Christ is not avoided; every definition of the church, even missionary or "apostolic," is, on this basis — and this is said also by way of criticism — only proximate and bound to a particular situation.

THE PROGRESSIVE SITUATION

The situation with which the churches in Europe especially are confronted is one of embarrassment. It will be determined in Part Three whether the question of the missionary situation is applicable to Europe. If the question must be considered, the situation has already been outlined. In any case, it is at least clear that the situation is no longer that of the *Corpus Christianum*.

The whole analysis of the situation depends on the theological point of departure which is assumed and the point at which the situation is actually grasped. Clearly, the situation can be the subject of legitimate theological inquiry on the basis of the Word, and the question of the biblical view of the Church in the situation is embraced by that inquiry. The point, though, at which the situation is disclosed in its reality is controversial.

Fundamentally, there are but two points of departure even in an extremely complex situation. Either an essentially vigorous continuation of Christian temper is reckoned with on the basis of recurrently unexpected observations; or the process of de-Christianization is seen rapidly emerging from places in which it seems to be essentially complete. Sociologically, there are enough illustrations to support either point of

¹⁸ Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church*, pp. 101-02; for an example of the "catholic" understanding, see D. E. Jenkins, "The Church, Bride of Christ, and Her Mission in the World," *The Student World*, I (1957), 331-37.

departure. Naturally, they originate from different social spheres.

The discussion on evangelism is dominated by the second point of departure, which was introduced particularly by J. C. Hoekendijk. The fact of a non-Christian milieu in western Europe is taken to signify that the situation is making great headway. If the decision to accept this starting point is evaluated theologically, it follows that, on the basis of the Word, it was derived from the viewpoint that the proclamation must be concentrated on those people who are most distant from the church. Behind this view lies the theologically accurate insight that the proclamation can prove a success only if it sets its sights afar. Then the proclamation will at all events reach also those who live in the shadow of the church.

From this point in the ecumenical discussion, if fully accepted, an obvious but difficult step becomes necessary. S. C. Neill alone has viewed the situation from the aspect of the formation of Communist society. This has been done at no point in the discussion on evangelism and has been mentioned elsewhere in the ecumenical movement only in the most isolated instances.¹⁹ Actually, here the proclamation finds itself in a position similar to that in which it is confronted by the men under Islam; only very rarely will this endeavor not fail. But can this mean that this situation is to be utterly abandoned? Do not the churches within the domain of Communist ideology intend to speak of the hope even to the Communists? S. C. Neill says: "If we no longer have the power to convert communists, then we might well be advised as Christians and Churches just to make our wills and give up the struggle."²⁰

¹⁹ S. C. Neill, *Evangelism* (New York, 1948), p. 5. L. Constantine, "The Gospel to Communists," *International Review of Missions*, XLI (1952), 202-15. R. Mehl, "The Hope of the Marxist," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1954), 122-28. *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, Section III.

²⁰ Neill, *Evangelism*, p. 5.

This statement already relates to the missionary action of the churches. Reverting to the situation, this sentence puts the question: Is not the situation in western Europe thrown into a new light by that phase in which the 'anti-gospel' of Marxism-Leninism has extensively supplanted the gospel of Jesus Christ and steadily perseveres in the struggle? This occurs sociologically and theologically: sociologically, in connection with the establishment of new social formations and with their power of expansion; theologically, in connection with the eschatological view of the situation, which is especially pressing in communism (and Islam). It is a vital missionary experience that the way in which the religious man appears in the sphere of the churches is to be most clearly seen among men bound to the religions of the world. It is just as instructive to look at the impetus of secularism from the place where it is developed into a closed and radical system. The post-Christian religious and pseudo-religious movements elicit what has always been part of the misconstrued freedom of the man outwardly touched by Christianity.

If this feature in the analysis of the situation surrounding the churches is proven correct it will imply that the churches will have to reconstruct their understanding of that which confronts their proclamation. Then they will see for themselves the *new element of confrontation*, which is theologically distinct from that of the past in that it can no longer be fetched home, but has to be called entirely anew.

NEW OBEDIENCE: TOTAL ACTION

The problem is best clarified by the following questions: Can the evangelistic proclamation, as it is in spite of the best intentions and the strongest presentation, be practicable in creating a breach in a communistically integrated group of men? Is it possible for the churches, as they are in spite of all their good insights, to renounce the attempt at bourgeois-assimilating incorporation both of individuals of this group

as well as of the entire group itself, and thus to let this group—presupposing its decision for Christ—become a congregation of a peculiar and novel type?

In the ecumenical discussion these questions have been directed to the point at which the missionary action of the churches is treated. In consequence, the intention of the discussion is given more precise definition. As we bring these questions into relief, we shall emphasize a weighty point in the discussion and underscore its priority. Concomitantly, the question arises as to whether this point must not receive much more concentrated attention within the discussion than previously.

For this is a matter of the decisive question as to the task of the churches in a world which is being transformed into a new object of confrontation. Individualistic preaching for the sake of conversion, prompted by a profound faith, has, on the whole, come to nought. The evangelistic work of the churches, which sometimes demonstrates extraordinary courage, appears to be foundering because the churches usually stand behind such work only in so far as lost individuals can be reclaimed through the active faith of other individuals. The churches no more vigorously support their respective "shock-troops" with their whole congregations than they are prepared to undergo change in the structure of their local congregations. Usually the churches neither are communities themselves, nor openly welcome other sorts of communities; but precisely this is the inescapable necessity, i.e., a community which has grown into a congregation under the Word and through the sacraments. Such a congregation would as a whole be "a real foretaste"²¹ of the future kingdom; and its love (*diakonia*) would find the path to a way of living in service and hope in which neither the protests of a vanquished Christianity nor the approbation of church doctrine can achieve what lies exclusively in the power of united witness

²¹ Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 147.

to the gospel. And this would give power and *freedom* for an answer of its own, and surely an answer different from that which once shaped the present form of a congregation. S. C. Neill said at Whitby:

The task of the Church to-day is, in a sentence, to recover its leadership in the revolution. . . . From the beginning, and in its essential nature, the Church has been revolutionary. Christ sent it out as an explosive, corrosive, destructive force.²²

With this direction of its statements, the ecumenical discussion on evangelism is doubtlessly challenging the churches to risk themselves as established institutions in their present form (without disavowing the institution as such). Theologically the demand would have to be rejected were it made because of a situation which could change overnight. Of course, it was mentioned in the discussion of the situation, though amid all sorts of careless theological digressions, that the situation and the experiences accompanying the situation in the course of evangelism raise a question with regard to the Holy Scripture, namely, what is to be said, on the basis of the Word, with regard to the bearer of the witness in this situation of a breakdown of the *Corpus Christianum* and its social order. The question falls within the demesne of biblical eschatology—here the decisive element in the genesis of the main theme of Evanston appears again; and biblical eschatology imparts freedom in the face of the historical because in biblical eschatology hope is announced for what lies in the future. Only in hope may the risk be run and only in hope may mention be made of this risk of total missionary action on the part of the churches and congregations. Only in an eschatological state of mind will the new obedience be possible which the Word demands as it wishes to make its way into the world today. Only by believing in the *eschatological* dealings of God with his people is *renewal* conceivable.

²² S. C. Neill, "A Revolutionary Church," *Renewal and Advance*, pp. 75, 64.

V

The Course of the Ecumenical Discussion on Evangelism

The theological impetus for the ecumenical discussion on the problem and task of evangelism was provided by the international missionary movement. Practically speaking, the discussion was set in motion through impulses freshly developed principally in the following movements: the "National Preaching Missions"; the "Evangelism Crusades" of the American Methodist Church; the later "New Life Movement" of the Presbyterian Church of the USA; the work of the Commission on Evangelism of the Church of England;¹ the work of the Commission for the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis appointed by the Church of Scotland;² the work initiated in Holland on the "Apostolate"; the group associated with the French CIMADE; and finally the re-orientation of church work, which began with the founding of the Evangelical Academies in Germany, beyond the customary proclamation of congregations.

THE PREPARATIONS

The new view of the missionary and evangelical task of the churches — the conjunction of missionary and evangelical should be noted — received expression at the meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches,

¹ *Towards the Conversion of England. Being the Report of a Commission on Evangelism Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York . . . , Westminster* (London: J. M. Dent, 1945); cf. W. Temple, *The Church Looks Forward* (London: Macmillan, 1944).

² *God's Will for Church and Nation* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1946). *Into All the World: A Statement on Evangelism* (Glasgow, 1946).

which was "in process of formation," in April, 1947, at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. At this meeting an important supplement to the constitutional draft formulated by the Committee of Fourteen was proposed and accepted. The Committee had been formed in 1937 by the ecumenical movements on "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order" and had elaborated the constitutional draft at its conference in Utrecht on May 12, 1938. The draft of 1938 provided for the following functions of the World Council:

- I. To carry on the work of the two world movements for Faith and Order and for Life and Work.
- II. To facilitate common action by the Churches.
- III. To promote cooperation in study.
- IV. To promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches.
- V. To establish relations with denominational federations of worldwide scope and with other ecumenical movements.
- VI. To call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require, such conferences being empowered to publish their own findings.³

The supplement, which was later accepted along with the entire draft by the First Assembly at Amsterdam, read:

- VII. To support the Churches in their task of evangelization.⁴

The argument underlying this carefully formulated function, which had not come to view in 1938, approached the task as implicit in two elements which were to become characteristic for the ecumenical discussion on evangelism (our new conception is seen here):

... to give clear expression to its [the World Council's] desire to collaborate with the International Missionary Council in the task of world-wide evangelization and to stimulate and assist the Churches in meeting more adequately their responsibilities for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ to all men everywhere in all their individual and social relationships.⁵

³ *Documents of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam 1948*, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*

At the same time the Provisional Committee introduced three important personal determinants. No representative of revival or home missions evangelization was entrusted with laying the foundations for the new work, but rather a man of missions. This was the Deputy Secretary General and Co-Director of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches, S. C. Neill, a former missionary of the Church Missionary Society and Bishop of Tinnevely (Church of India, Burma and Ceylon). As chairman of the Provisional Committee for Section II ("The Church's Witness to God's Design") of the Amsterdam Assembly, H. Kraemer was chosen. From missionary work in Indonesia he had provided the central theological work preparatory to the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras (1938). As professor of the history and phenomenology of religion (1937) at the University of Leyden, he was — especially during the war years — the fearless and patient mentor of the renewal of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. And from January, 1948, to 1954 he headed the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. J. A. Mackay, a missionary in Latin America for many years and from 1947 to 1958 president — now honorary president — of the International Missionary Council, was chairman of the deliberations of the Sections Committee. These personal determinants clearly indicate in what way the supplement (VII) must be read. "Evangelization" (evangelism), which the World Council of Churches acknowledged and declared as necessary of encouragement, unambiguously possesses at its basis a *missionary standing*. The new view of evangelism is manifested here and the way is cleared for the new ecumenical understanding of evangelism.

AMSTERDAM: S. C. NEILL AND H. KRAEMER

S. C. Neill's task in preparation for the discussion on evangelism at Amsterdam covered both the theological question of evangelism and the question of its situation and action. On the

whole, his work was limited by the receptivity and capabilities of the churches and their delegates with regard to Section Two, which was by no means widely disseminated as an active force because of or at Amsterdam. His task was further rendered difficult by the meager reports submitted by the churches on their evangelistic work. The theological question of evangelism, therefore, could not make any genuine progress at Amsterdam; and the question of situation and action could not properly be carried to the consequences toward which the preparatory work had pointed. So it came about that the theme of evangelism played a relatively negligible role at Amsterdam, a fact painful to mention in view of the intent and quality of the preliminary work.

The meetings of the Section that concerned itself with "The Church's Witness to God's Design" were attended by delegates who, though most of them held positions of high leadership in their denominations, did not possess special or extraordinary expertness in evangelistic affairs. By being made to discuss the problems of evangelism, they were subjected to an educational process which all the Churches belonging to the World Council will have to undergo.⁶

However, the nucleus of the projected goal of the discussion was successfully given expression in the Report of Section II through careful leadership and on the basis of the outline presented by S. C. Neill:

It is a Church that today desires to treat evangelism as the common task of all the churches, and transcends the traditional distinction between the so-called Christian and so-called non-Christian lands.

The present day is the beginning of a new epoch of missionary enterprise, calling for the pioneering spirit, and for the dedication of many lives to the service of the Gospel of God.⁷

The volume of preliminary work for Section II,⁸ drafted by H. Kraemer and S. C. Neill and edited by the latter, was

⁶ W. Pauck, "Impressions of the Discussion on Evangelism," *Christendom*, XIII (1948), p. 475.

⁷ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 214.

⁸ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

far in advance of the discussion. It is to be regarded as the foundation of the first fruitful ecumenical discussion on evangelism, which occurred later. In general, this was a horizontal foundation in its statements on the message and basis as well as the situation and action of evangelism. It was the attempt initially necessary to reduce the complexities of the puzzling problem. After Amsterdam it served as a point of orientation — a noteworthy accomplishment in the brief time available for its composition — for the slowly growing discussion on evangelism. Accordingly, S. C. Neill and H. Kraemer were pre-eminent in the initial stages of the discussion.

BOSSEY

Continuing the discussion of Amsterdam specifically, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey formed in March, 1949, a "Study Conference on Evangelism"⁹ under the leadership of H. Kraemer which was dedicated to situation and action in the metropolitan area. If, as a point of departure, the discussion at Amsterdam insured the missionary standing of evangelism, the conference at Bossey advanced to the question of the *missionary church* as a central problem, if not indeed as the most important problem of evangelism in its situation and action. The conference achieved this amid various differences of opinion among the participants, marked as they were by their theological backgrounds and the nature of their work, and propagated a finding which had already been weighed at Amsterdam:

Everyone was agreed that the Church had to undergo radical changes in order to become the right instrument for evangelism . . . [that the church is unprepared] for its task of evangelism . . . because the Church does not know the world [and is] not fit to become the spiritual home of those who have found the way of Christ.¹⁰

⁹ *Study Conference on Evangelism* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1949).

¹⁰ H. Kraemer, "Introductory Report," *Study Conference on Evangelism*, p. 2.

Here we find the problem of the church enunciated for the first time. In the course of the discussion this problem was to move to the fore more and more, and attention was focused on this subject ever anew. Here, as later, the voice of H. Kraemer is speaking, who gave the problem theological relevance and directed it toward fruitful elaboration. H. Kraemer's work on the problem of the structure of the congregation in Holland was very beneficial to the ecumenical discussion. The elaboration of the problem of the loss of individuality in the industrial world and the question regarding the co-operation of the laity on the part of this conference initiated an important ecumenical study which is closely associated with the name of J. C. Hoekendijk.

THE SECRETARIAT FOR EVANGELISM: J. C. HOEKENDIJK

J. C. Hoekendijk, secretary of the Netherlands' Missionary Council and subsequently professor of missionary science at the University of Utrecht (1952), was the first to occupy the position, created by the Amsterdam Assembly, of Secretary of Evangelism in the General Secretariat of the World Council of Churches at Geneva (from August, 1949, to November, 1952). He is a man of great vigor and enthusiasm, and is courageously dedicated to the affairs of evangelism, which he regards as the real task and lifeblood of ecumenicity. Among the theological achievements in the discussion on evangelism, his work is foremost. He has rigorously undertaken bold theological reflection, though impeded by a stolid, institutionalized church; relentlessly exposed the situation of the churches in their current state; and analyzed the present state of the churches in the light of their rapid a-Christian development. With his finger on the pulse of church and world, he is unsparing of the sharpest criticism. J. C. Hoekendijk has not only succeeded in bringing the discussion on evangelism into sharp theological focus; he has also led the discussion in such a direction that it has had to

make essential decisions regarding the situation and action of evangelism. In strict, not to say radical, connection with the eschatological basis of evangelism, he has incisively raised the question of the new kind of confrontation for evangelism, by viewing it from the aspect of its consistent development in a totally de-Christianized milieu, e.g., that of the Parisian suburbs. Consequently, the question emerged as to the traditional evangelistic undertakings, which he rejected. This question in turn led to that of the church. J. C. Hoekendijk wanted to evolve a new conception of the church in the sense of the "Theology of the Apostolate" which was developed in Holland. He wanted to effect in a fresh way a living, missionary awareness of the church. A few of his characteristic sentences read:

We have run aground. . . . We have become second-rate descendants in the Christian mission. . . . Our missionary apparatus is for the most part scandalously antiquated. . . . Missionary conferences and festivals are often reminiscent of assemblies of camp-followers from the nineteenth century. . . . In expectation of a possible attack by overpowering pagan surroundings, the attempt is made to construct a firm bastion of the church, which makes aggressive evangelism of the surroundings impossible. . . . It is always the same: A justified desire on the part of the church to be allowed to remain true to itself as church is thwarted at certain times by the illegitimate fear of possibly compromising oneself. Can we function as apostles in this world with a wall of principles around us? . . . Consequently our evangelism at present consists almost exclusively of superficial missions, of ecclesiastical coastal navigation, of spiritual suburban traffic. . . . The present presupposition of almost all existing evangelism is that evangelism takes place within a Christian world. We shall have to abandon this assumption in the apostolate outside of the milieu of the "third" man. For the "fourth" man, there is nothing to be recalled or revived; for him, only a caricature of Christianity remains. By means of this caricature the "fourth" man has immunized himself to the whole business. This means that in a post-Christian situation the apostolate will lose every likeness to a "revival movement" and must adopt the forms of "missionary work."¹¹

¹¹ J. C. Hoekendijk, "Die Theologie des 'vierden' Menschen," *Die neue Furche*, VII (1953), 391-97.

The program of study of 1949

J. C. Hoekendijk's first work as Secretary of Evangelism was to elaborate the program of study, "The Evangelization of Man in Modern Mass Society."¹² Through this program of study, the question raised at Amsterdam and made concrete at Bossey in 1949 was to become further sharpened and rendered accessible to a large circle of the member churches. The program aimed at preventing the discussion from breaking down between assemblies. Among its goals were these:

To locate the problem, to find out where we are in relation to this new type of society that has been growing up for 200 years, and in which the Church in many parts of the world has progressively failed to maintain its hold. . . . To challenge the churches to experiment, and perhaps to help them by the inspiration of what, in different parts of the Church, is actually being achieved.¹³

The implementation of the program in the churches was, to put it bluntly, wretched. Here a thorny problem manifests itself, which ought not to remain unmentioned, with respect to ecumenical endeavors in evangelism in particular and with respect to other efforts of the ecumenical discussion in general. The problematic formulated in the discussion and the results achieved — both of the greatest importance for the life of the churches in their communities — rarely arrive at the level at which they should and could become fruitful. In other words, in spite of every journalistic exertion, the evaluating and testing of positions developed in the discussion at best remain confined to those who are particularly interested in an ecumenical problem. Generally, the noteworthy assistance rendered the concrete distress of the congregation by the ecumenical discussion oozes away in the sand of the accustomed, but unalterable, and therefore universally

¹² Hoekendijk, *The Evangelization of Man in Modern Mass Society* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Sept. 1949).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

lamented management of affairs. (The extent to which theological seminaries share in doings of this sort would be, *horribile dictu*, worthy of a memorial.)

Added to this difficulty, widely known as the problem of "blocked channels,"¹⁴ another came to the surface, which is implicit in the contents of this program of study. It was a difficulty similar to, if not identical with, the one suffered at Amsterdam in the discussion of Section II. S. C. Neill and H. Kraemer were far in advance of the participants in the Amsterdam discussion in perceiving the problem, but the latter persisted in dawdling in the face of a new view of evangelism. Similarly, the problematic, developed in the program of study, of the congregation and the demand for its missionary transformation lay far beyond the immediate comprehension of those whom the congregations selected to participate in the discussion. Indeed, it lay beyond even the groups of "specialists" formed by a few churches. Likewise, the problematic proved too much for the expectations which were attached to ecumenical assistance through the factual "new concern for evangelism in many Churches."¹⁵ These expectations aimed at achieving with utmost speed the most effective help possible in the execution of a few evangelistic undertakings, at the immediate solution of difficulties and of specific questions. In short, these expectations wished to let the Secretariat serve as a "world-clearing-house for all problems of evangelism."¹⁶ This procedure was tantamount to complete misconstruction of the extensive theological work which the problem of evangelism entailed as well as misconstruction of the far-reaching consequences of that work. The official report on the progress of the program of study consequently had to read:

¹⁴ Cf. *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle, Switzerland, August 4-11, 1951*, p. 102. Hereafter quoted as *Rolle, 1951*.

¹⁵ *Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Toronto, Canada, July 9-15, 1950*, p. 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 115.

This study is making only very slow progress. The two main reasons seem to be: i) an almost chaotic confusion as to the meaning of evangelism, so that it is very difficult to define the exact scope of this enquiry (e.g., in relation to the study on "Christian Action in Society"); and ii) the study groups discover very quickly that nothing short of a radical reconsideration of the *total* pattern of the Church's life is required to assess realistically the evangelistic task in the world of today. Very often they hesitate to undertake such a comprehensive re-examination of the structure of the Church. (They say it is "too dangerous")! ¹⁷

This passage shows how the ecumenical efforts dealing with evangelism keenly grappled with both the conception, which was formed under the aegis of evangelization, and the program of winning back or winning anew church territory or generally Christian areas. The struggle still continues extensively in the present discussion in spite of the improvement made at Evanston in the point of departure.

The surveys

The surveys were written in the framework of broad as well as specific information and documentation (analysis of the situation and report on evangelistic work). They were based, following a brief publication on the situation and work in Finland,¹⁸ on rather lengthy remarks by J. C. Hoekendijk on the problem of evangelism in Holland.¹⁹ To this was soon added a well-known publication by the same man on the situation in France and the questions which had arisen there concerning the proclamation.²⁰ Both these models underlay the survey prepared by R. W. Scott on India²¹ and the survey assembled by T. R. Morton on Scotland.²² Later

¹⁷ *Rolle*, 1951, p. 108. The critical accent of the program of study had been sharply presented by J. C. Hoekendijk in "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *op. cit.*, pp. 133-40.

¹⁸ "Evangelism in Finland," (Geneva, 1949) (MS).

¹⁹ *Evangelism in Holland* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1950).

²⁰ *Evangelism in France* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1952).

²¹ *Evangelism in India* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1952); cf. R. W. Scott (ed.), *Ways of Evangelism. Some Principles and Methods of Evangelism in India* (Madras, 1957).

²² *Evangelism in Scotland* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954).

the works of R. Obermüller on Latin America, G. E. Sweazey on the United States, H. H. Ulrich on Germany and P. Maury on political questions were added to these.²³

The survey most important for the question of the situation and action of evangelism is the one on France. On the one hand, it describes a situation which can be said to apply with equal trenchancy to other countries. On the other hand, the survey of France consciously gives the details of starting points for missionary action which will very soon manifest themselves as guideposts even outside of the particular climate of France. In this survey the situation is regarded as a purely missionary situation and action is seen and demanded as purely missionary action. Accordingly, the Catholic works on the situation and action in France have been critically utilized.

Over and above these, there are works that deviate from these aforementioned surveys thematically and/or formally: the report of a conference on the situation and task in Ceylon;²⁴ a description of the evangelistic endeavors in Germany;²⁵ a presentation of Roman Catholic methods;²⁶ and a work on the renaissance of various religions.²⁷ These publications did not appear under J. C. Hoekendijk's authoritative supervision or responsibility.

The material collected in the surveys and the subsequent evaluation were irreplaceable for the ecumenical discussion.

²³ R. Obermüller, *Evangelism in Latin America* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1957). G. E. Sweazey, *Effective Evangelism* (New York: Harper, 1953). H. H. Ulrich, *Evangelism in Germany* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1958). P. Maury, *Evangelism and Politics* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1959). These surveys no longer appear in the series of Ecumenical Studies, but rather in the series edited by D. T. Niles, "World Evangelism Today."

²⁴ *So Send I You (Evangelism in Ceylon). A Working Conference on Evangelism* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1953). A report on the session: J. P. Alder, "Towards the Evangelization of Ceylon," *Ecumenical Review*, V (1953), 407-12.

²⁵ H. H. Ulrich, *Die Kirche und ihre missionarische Aufgabe. Tatsachen und Probleme der Evangelisation in Deutschland* ("Studien fuer Evangelisation und Volksmission," Vol. I [Berlin: Christlicher Zeitschriftenverlag, 1955]).

²⁶ *New Methods of Evangelism in the Roman Catholic Church* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1956).

²⁷ S. Kulandran, *Resurgent Religions* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1957).

By virtue of this material, it is incumbent upon the discussion to obtain a basic knowledge of the situation in the various countries of the world and to be informed on the manner in which the churches in these countries cope with it. Through this knowledge, the discussion is forced to direct its formulations to specific situations. The efforts of the discussion at formulations are in part bewilderingly simple because they derive from a biblically correct grasp of the situation and the action which the churches must undertake. From such efforts the discussion receives various pointers which it can mediate. The surveys provide the possibility for the discussion to verify the theological questions of evangelism in practical evangelistic experience and to measure this experience with reference to the theological questions.

The edition of the surveys has remained small.

Accomplishments and tasks

J. C. Hoekendijk's important commentary on the report of the work of the Secretary of Evangelism, which he presented before the Central Committee of the World Council at its fourth meeting (Rolle, 1951), summarized the accomplishments and tasks of the Secretariat:

... we should not consider evangelism as one of the functions of the Church but rather as its "raison d'être." To undertake a realistic study of evangelism, therefore, is to consider the total life of the Church. In this process it is necessary to mobilise three different groups. Of these the first is the member Churches, although they have shown very little interest in the matter. Theological faculties have replied concerning the enquiry, one saying that "we do not teach evangelism in our curriculum" and another indicating that their course of study is chosen "for the preparation of a pastoral task, that is not an evangelistic one." This lack of interest is in part explained by the fact that the rediscovery of evangelism implies a revolution in the life of the Church. ... Secondly, we must mobilize movements which are within the Christian constituency but not organically part of the Churches. We have had considerable correspondence with such movements but the outcome is dis-

appointing, principally because of the desire of these movements to press for their individual conceptions of the task. The third group is that of the radicals who pioneer, but do not desire publicity for their work because for the most part it is yet in its beginning stages. As a whole we face a threefold task:

—Churches and theological faculties must be challenged so that the desire for self-preservation becomes overwhelmed by a desire to reach out into the world for the Gospel;

—the movements mentioned above must be led to a thorough self-criticism;

—the radicals indicated must be interpreted to the Churches and helped to see the next steps involved.

In the following three years the Secretariat will be concerned with three main topics. The first is a study of the problems involved in the communication of the Gospel. The second concerns the development of an adequate theology of evangelism. The third is to discover a true pattern of life and structure for an evangelizing Church.²⁸

J. C. Hoekendijk's commentary concludes:

As we approach the Second Assembly the most decisive question is whether we can combine the charisma of Christian imagination in order that we may rethink the nature and structure of the Church in its evangelistic purpose with a new awareness of the great urgency in our concern for evangelism.²⁹

EVANSTON

When J. C. Hoekendijk accepted a call to the University of Utrecht in 1952, he was no longer able to carry through the preparatory work inaugurated by him for Section II of the Second Assembly at Evanston. Especially on the question of the missionary church, this work strongly betrayed traces of his hand (later individual sections were deleted);³⁰ and the very important declarations collected in it were characteristic of the surveys. The loss his departure entailed for the ecumenical discussion is clearly indicated by the gap which

²⁸ *Rolle*, 1951, p. 29. By "movements" are understood "(Home) Missionary Boards, Laymen's and Youth Movements, and the like" (*ibid.*, p. 102).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39 ff.

³⁰ "Evangelism: The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life" (First Draft, MS) (1952).

is noticeable in the discussion about 1952-53. The discussion was bereft not only of working power, but of a man who would have been able to initiate and bring to formulation the theology of evangelism on the strength of Evanston and who would have therefore consistently developed the christological-eschatological point of departure for the theology of evangelism. With such a loss the discussion, which was only slightly advanced at Evanston, dragged on with little success until the spring of 1958. The discussion had lost to a great extent its theological impetus and now could not avoid the empirical difficulties in the problem so as to pursue a rectilinear movement from the point of departure of evangelism. As far as its abilities would allow, the Division of Studies recognized the task to be undertaken. Then R. D. Hyslop (Professor at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, later at Union Theological Seminary, New York) temporarily put himself at the Division's disposal. The direction of the preparatory work devolved on the chairman of the Preparatory Committee on Section II. To this post T. O. Wedel, Canon of the Cathedral in Washington, D.C. (Protestant Episcopal) and Warden of the College of Preachers, had been called. The ecumenical discussion acquired a colleague of broad perspective and depth in T. O. Wedel. His article in the work preparatory to Section II of Evanston directed the discussion especially toward practical questions, and his address at Evanston helped to render the cardinal question of the discussion both understandable and obligatory for the Assembly, i.e., the question of renewing the church so as to effect comprehensive missionary living. The statement, "Evangelism involves the total impact of a Christian community upon its total environment,"³¹ characterized his position as well as the fact that he, to a great extent, re-

³¹ T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism. The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 22.

sumed the work of J. C. Hoekendijk.³² Though exercising great patience and achieving conclusive results, T. O. Wedel has not brought the discussion completely through the critical years since the departure of J. C. Hoekendijk. To be sure, it was noticeable very soon in the preparation of the sectional themes of Evanston what little provision had been made for a theological basis for evangelism that bore the stamp of the main theme's point of departure. Such lack of concern was all the more important when the work on the main theme not only induced the eschatological view of evangelism, but also by virtue of its ecumenical validity absolutely demanded it. Because this was apparently not recognized, the preparatory writings, which would otherwise be important for the theological work, are almost pointless from this angle. In criticism of the Introductory Pamphlet of Section II, H. D. Wendland wrote that the question, enthusiastically discussed nowadays, of the eschatological basis of the church's mission does not seem to have been assimilated, or at least not adequately so. It is also important that the theme, "Hope," once the authors paid it their respects in the introduction, disappeared with alarming rapidity, apparently because they had something more important to say.³³

R. C. Raines, a bishop of the (American) Methodist Church, was chairman of the Committee on Section II at Evanston; E. G. Gulin, a bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, was deputy chairman. The secretary of the Preparatory Commission and of the Committee on Sections was D. T. Niles, pastor of the Methodist Church

³² T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism's Threefold Witness: Kerygma, Koinonia, Diakonia," *Ecumenical Review*, IX (1957), 225-39; cf. J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 171 ff. Also: T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism: An Essay in Criticism," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1951), 362-71.

³³ H. D. Wendland, *Christian Hope and Christian Ethos* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1953). H. Meyer, "Evangelism—The Driving Force in the Ecumenical Movement," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 428.

in Ceylon (Rector of Jaffna Central Colleges since 1956 and currently the General Secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference) and president of the World Student Christian Association.

The discussion in Section II at Evanston differed from that at Amsterdam in one major respect. Against the background of the achievements primarily of J. C. Hoekendijk and of the stronger missionary concentration of the entire Assembly, the initial difficulties of Amsterdam were overcome. Not only a greater openness, but also a more thorough knowledge of the matter at hand could be observed among the numerous participants in the discussion. Above all, the theological problem of the new kind of confrontation was seen! Even the question put to the churches on their biblical-missionary ("apostolic") form, which had made the prosecution of the program of study of 1949 much more difficult, encountered scarcely any obstacles in the Section. The Report, which was reserved on this question—thus the Section (E. Berggrav) regretted to say—would not shock the churches so; it would not have the character of a "challenge to the churches," as might be desired.³⁴ In general, the significance which the question of evangelism possesses for the entire ecumenical movement can be said to have come to the surface at Evanston:

... the report on Evangelism offers the most biblical testimony yet given by any ecumenical gathering. Here again there was an unanimous affirmation that it is the function of the Church to proclaim to the world that Jesus is Lord. It marks a definite advance in the rediscovery of the Gospel, and further progress on this road will more and more manifest the liberating power which stems from any return to the Scriptures.³⁵

The statements of the Report, though, remained largely formulatary. It has already been pointed out (in Part One)

³⁴ Cf. P. Maury, "Evangelism—The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," *Ecumenical Review*, VII (1954), 29.

³⁵ W. Freytag, "Impressions of the Evanston Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, VII (1954), 12.

that the purpose of evangelism as formulated in the Report in no way corresponded to the efforts of Willingen and to the Report of the Advisory Commission. On the contrary, it was drawn into proximity with the ideology of *Corpus Christianum* in remarkable misconstruction of the eschatological significance of the missionary category. Clearly, the eschatological context was not fully grasped in the discussion. Consequently, amid all the fundamentally important declarations of the Report and in spite of its initial sentence, which has already been mentioned several times, the Report lacked a full expresion of the eschatological pilgrimage of the church.³⁶

Since Evanston this has been the cardinal question in the ecumenical discussion on the situation and action of evangelism. In the discussion following Evanston, it would appear that this question has been dropped rather than pursued boldly. This fact explains our intensified reference to the eschatological basis of evangelism.

THE DEPARTMENT ON EVANGELISM

At Evanston the Secretariat of Evangelism was changed into a Department and subjoined to the Division of Studies, amid a reorganization of ecumenical work approved by the Second Assembly. The individual bureaus of the General Secretariat were rearranged so as to correspond to the growth of the ecumenical discussion.³⁷

Within the Division of Studies, which, with a seat in the World Council, is supported by the World Council along with the International Missionary Council, the following Departments were accordingly formed:

³⁶ "Prof. Torrance . . . said that in the New Testament the motive (of evangelism) was more objectively set forth." *The Evanston Report. The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 109.

³⁷ *Assembly Workbook. Prepared for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1954).

- 1) The Department on Faith and Order
- 2) The Department on Church and Society
- 3) The Department on Evangelism
- 4) The Department on Missionary Studies

The aims and functions of the Division and its departments were also rewritten. The directives making the Department on Evangelism the center for the discussion on the churches' evangelism reads: "The aim of the Department shall be to serve the churches by promoting ecumenical study and consultation on the evangelistic calling and task of the churches." The functions of the Department shall be:

- i) to keep prominently before the World Council, all its divisions and departments and its member churches, their evangelistic and missionary obligation ["and its call to unity" is a later addition, cf. *The Evanston Report*, pp. 201, 222];
- ii) as and when requested, to help churches in activities of common witness and evangelism;
- iii) to undertake studies concerning the method and content of the evangelistic approach of the church toward those outside its life;
- iv) to collect and circulate to the churches information on effective approaches to evangelism.³⁸

At the same time, the Second Assembly accepted the proposal to make the Preparatory Committee on the work of the sections in the assemblies a continuous organization, to add it as the Working Committee to the departments of the divisions, and to add a Committee on Divisions to each division. W. Freytag was chosen as chairman of the Committee on Divisions for the Division of Studies; and T. O. Wedel as chairman of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism.

D. T. Niles

D. T. Niles, the secretary of the Preparatory Committee as well as of the Section Committee of Section II at Evanston and the chaplain of both Assemblies, was called to direct the

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

Department on Evangelism. The Executive Committee and the Central Committee of the World Council acquired in him a man who represented great hope for the ecumenical discussion through his missionary experience and his reflections on the question of evangelism.³⁹ It was impossible, though, for D. T. Niles to forego his work in Ceylon entirely and to dedicate himself completely to his task in the World Council. Thus the energy and experience of D. T. Niles were only partially available to the ecumenical discussion in spite of the greatest personal willingness of the man. The discussion has, as a result, suffered considerably since Evanston. During the first years following the second assembly, the discussion in general consisted in little more than hesitant efforts. Proceeding from the positions reached before and at Evanston, the attempt was made to explicate a theology of evangelism, a reorganization of the churches, and the problem of communicating the gospel. Discussion was also devoted to making various specific problems concrete. Not until the spring of 1958 was a return to further productive work clearly indicated.

With the support of his colleagues in the Division of Studies, D. T. Niles continued the publication of the ecumenical surveys and introduced the publication of *A Monthly Letter About Evangelism*,⁴⁰ in which reports on the practice of evangelism have been published since January, 1956.

The Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism

Through the Working Committee the circle of participants in the discussion responsible for the ecumenical work on

³⁹ D. T. Niles, *Sir, We Would See Jesus. A Study in Evangelism* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1938). Niles, *Eternal Life, Now* (London, 1947). Niles, *That They May Have Life* (New York: Harper, 1951). Niles, *Points to Be Remembered in Discussing Evangelism in Terms of the Asian Scene* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1952). Niles, *An Evangelizing Church* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.). Niles, *The Preacher's Calling to Be Servant* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1959).

⁴⁰ A bibliographic survey of all the letters is included in No. 7, October 1959.

the question of evangelism has been enlarged. In one respect, this has complicated the direct movement of the discussion toward useful results. A number of questions which demonstrated in part that the Willingen and Evanston results have scarcely, if at all, been elaborated in some places, impeded the discussion unnecessarily.⁴¹ In another respect, it became possible for the Working Committee to fill the gaps left in the work by D. T. Niles' tasks in Ceylon and later in all East Asia, as much as a committee which met only rarely could do.

The Working Committee held its first meeting after Evanston in Davos at the end of July, 1955.⁴² The discussion centered around three main themes: "Theology for evangelism," "Evangelism — and changes in the life and structure of the churches," and "The church's ministry of healing and its place in the evangelistic task."

Under the question, "What changes in the life and structure of the churches are required if the gospel is to be heard by people outside?" further discussion was devoted to the decisive question of the program of study of 1949 and of the preceding conference at Bossey, the question which H. Kraemer had reduced to the formula, "indirect approach."⁴³ Here the discussion displayed utmost perseverance. The basic tone was set in this sentence:

... our failure is not that we have failed to discover, but rather that we have failed to implement over the years the things we have discovered and concluded to be true and necessary.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism, Davos, Switzerland, July 25-30, 1955.* Here can be found the discussion, concisely repeated, on the question of a theology of evangelism (App. 1: Discussion on a Theology for Evangelism) as well as the questions summarized at the end of the conference on further treatment of the problem (Particular Problems, pp. 8 ff.).

⁴² *Minutes and Reports of the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Davos (Grisons), Switzerland, August 2-8, 1955* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1955). Cf. "Evangelisation," *Mitteilungen aus der Studienabteilungen*, I, No. 1 (1955), 23-27.

⁴³ Letter of H. Kraemer to R. S. Bilheimer (*Documents on "Theology for Evangelism"*) on March 30, 1955.

⁴⁴ Preparatory Paper 7, pp. 3-4.

The first of the three themes, "Theology for evangelism,"⁴⁵ had been declared the main theme for the study of the Department at the meeting of the Working Committee. The Director of the Division of Studies, R. S. Bilheimer, had developed a problem of special significance on this theme.⁴⁶ The question as to the *authority of the proclamation* was given precedence over the question of the relation of preacher to hearer ("as both stand under the gospel") and the question of communicating the gospel. "The word which holds the key to the problem of evangelism in the modern world is *authority*."⁴⁷

This statement is based on various written replies to a circular letter of R. S. Bilheimer. The soundest reply was H. Kraemer's, which also employed the key word, "authority":

The Church has lost her authority. . . . Let us frankly say by using the title of a well-known book, the first requirement for the problem of evangelism is 'not a conversion of England; but a conversion of the Church.'⁴⁸

The report of the proceedings does not suggest that the discussion surpassed the Evanston formulations on the eschatological character of the church. At best, the discussion only reviewed the Evanston statements more closely. One might even be obliged to regard the discussion as having fallen behind the eschatological context of Evanston, despite H. Kraemer's suggestions, especially in regard to the question of authority. In the treatment of the first question of the discussion, "What is evangelism?," this becomes painfully clear. With extreme vagueness evangelism is said to be

⁴⁵ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Davos*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ R. S. Bilheimer, "Concerning 'Theology for Evangelism,'" *Documents on "Theology for Evangelism"* (Geneva: World Council of Churches). Quoted by special permission of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Kraemer to Bilheimer.

"participation in and proclamation of the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world." A subsequent sentence reads:

There is obvious concern in your Committee that much further discussion take place on the terminology of evangelism, and particularly that "evangelism" should be regarded not simply as an occasional or sporadic activity but as a continuous responsibility of the Church in the world.⁴⁹

The appeal in the demand that the churches consider evangelism a permanent task is for the most part—and is certainly in the report of the proceedings—a clear sign that what evangelism is biblically has not become relevant theologically! The reason for this denial in the Working Committee inheres in the failure to comprehend the eschatological import of the word, "authority:"

. . . there existed in the Working Committee considerable confusion regarding the meaning of the term "authority." . . . Does it refer to the subjective certainty or assurance of the evangelist; or to the listener's recognition of the authenticity of the message; or to the Truth behind the word and the experience of the evangelist himself?⁵⁰

At its second meeting at Herrenalb,⁵¹ Germany (1956), the Working Committee did not move beyond the unsatisfactory results of its sluggish first meeting at Davos in 1955. On the question, "Why is the task of evangelism urgent?," the discussion initially replied that "I cannot help proclaiming the Gospel. My obedience demands it. My joy demands to be shared." Not until the fifth part of the answer do we hear: "A Church which prays—Maranatha—is under urgent compulsion to preach the Gospel. The Gospel must first be proclaimed . . . then the end will come."⁵²

⁴⁹ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Davos*, App. I.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, cf. "Faithful Evangelism," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, I, No. 2 (October 1955), 28–29.

⁵¹ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism held at Herrenalb (Germany)* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1956).

⁵² *Ibid.*, App. 6.

A relevant manuscript of J. C. Hoekendijk — he participated in neither meeting — on a theology for evangelism⁵³ appears to have played no role. It would have afforded opportunity to define more precisely and sharply the formulations of Evanston and to correct them in a few places. For the continuation of the discussion the failure to use J. C. Hoekendijk's manuscript meant nothing less than a paralysis, difficult to cure, in coming to grips with the vital question of the discussion, and thus it registered futility and a waste of effort for the specific problems dealt with.

Yet the Committee clearly saw the weakness of the church in its execution of the proclamation, from the prevailing viewpoint of the situation and action of evangelism, and indicated as much in statements which were formulated as guides to discussion for a conference of so-called pioneer evangelists. The conference was planned under the theme, "Evangelism and the structure of the churches":

1. The inadequacy of present parish organizations and congregational life for evangelism among the industrial masses. An examination of attempts to reach these masses outside the framework of the parish.
2. The use of the existing parish as an instrument of evangelism and its reform in this interest.
3. The value and problems of evangelism through larger movements within the Church such as men's movements, evangelical academies, church offices for social evangelism, travelling evangelists, etc.
4. The values and limits of evangelism through special communities such as Iona, Taizé, Parishfield, etc.⁵⁴

The Working Committee had noticeably and correctly set its heart on this question. This is the point of emphasis! It has been adequately noted, though, that the Working Committee was and will continue to be in danger of failing to see the question against its proper, eschatological background.

⁵³ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Theology of Evangelism," *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, App. I.

⁵⁴ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, pp. 6-7.

Attention should now be called to the explicit reference of the Working Committee to the importance of the *sacraments*, which had only been mentioned sporadically in the discussion on evangelism:

It was felt . . . that . . . special attention should be given to the whole subject of baptism as [it is] related to the task of evangelism. It was also felt that we should seek greater understanding of what it meant in the celebration of Holy Communion to show forth [witness to] the Lord's death until he comes.⁵⁵

A discussion of baptism and communion in terms of their significance for evangelism, even if only by intimation, would decisively deepen the current ecumenical discussion.

The third meeting of the Working Committee was associated with a conference at Bossey, which was called for March, 1958, by the Department on Evangelism. The conference met under the theme, "Theology for Evangelism," which had been under discussion for over three years.⁵⁶ For preparation, the Department distributed both the systematic statement of T. O. Wedel on the three terms introduced by J. C. Hoekendijk, *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia*,⁵⁷ and additional work composed by R. L. Calhoun on behalf of a special commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ.⁵⁸

The aim of the conference at Bossey was to produce a document which would continue the discussion on evangelism

⁵⁵ *Minutes and Reports . . . Central Committee . . . Davos, 1955*, p. 44.

⁵⁶ D. A. Griffiths, "Consultation on a Theology for Evangelism," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, IV No. 1 (1958), 3-21.

⁵⁷ T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism's Threefold Witness: Kerygma, Koinoina, Diakonia," *op. cit.*, pp. 225-39.

⁵⁸ *The Good News of God. The Nature and Task of Evangelism*: The report of a special commission appointed by the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. to study the need, nature and purpose of evangelism for contemporary America (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1958); cf. J. N. Haritt, *Toward a Theology of Evangelism* (New York: Abingdon Pr., 1955).

at all levels on the basis of Evanston. Under the direction of T. O. Wedel and D. T. Niles this goal was achieved in such measure that it is possible to speak of a new pinnacle in the discussion and of the resolution of the crisis which had afflicted the discussion since Evanston.⁵⁹ Granted that the eschatological basis of evangelism and the eschatological setting of the goal of evangelism did not receive precise, complete, and well-placed expression, yet the document is based on the results of Evanston, and embraces, almost tacitly, the questions on evangelism raised there.

"Theology for Evangelism" was sent to the churches "for criticism and comment." The Central Department of Evangelism in the National Council of Churches called a Conference for Evangelism in May, 1959, to work on the document. This conference provided the best and most basic commentary expressing the North American viewpoint on evangelism.⁶⁰

At the third meeting of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism at Spittal, Austria (August, 1959), the document was critically examined again, commented upon, and was then presented to the Central Committee at its meeting at Rhodes (1959). After the discussion there, it was published under the title, "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism,"⁶¹ which constitutes its final form.

The most important statements of the document may be summarized in this way: The authority under which evangelism stands is that of Christ and his Spirit — "God is a missionary God."⁶² The urgency of evangelism is determined by the fact that hearing and believing the gospel make witness compulsory and that in such witness the life of those who believe consists. Evangelism in word and deed is a sign

⁵⁹ *Theology for Evangelism* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1958).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶ 26.

⁶¹ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, V (1959), 1-2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

of the coming end. The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is the servant of Christ in God's continual dealings in history; and through the church the proclamation pointing to judgment and justification is uttered. The proclamation takes place in the spoken Word, through *diakonia* in the broadest sense of the word, and through the church in unity — "Its very existence is itself a witness to the world"⁶³ — as well as through intercessory prayer in worship. The "dilemma of the evangelist"⁶⁴ is resolved in that he is confronted in the proclamation of the Word with the Word itself and is borne by it and is taken into it in "faithfulness, obedience and purity."⁶⁵ The forms of legitimate evangelism must allow room both for personal decision for no one but Christ and for the concrete obedience which follows from the proper decision. They must lead those who believe into the church, from which they are to go out again in missionary service. For the churches, the document demands a flexible structure equal to the exigencies of evangelism amid the social change of the present world. It reads:

The same reality of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church can appear in the structure of the house-church which assembles the Christians of one street, and in a "Kirchentag," . . . in a local parish . . . or in a brotherhood, . . . in the work of a team of laymen and clergy, . . . or in an ashram, . . . or where non-Christians are gathered for prayer and Bible study in the house of a convert.⁶⁶

The endeavor of the Working Committee to comprehend evangelism theologically has now come to a temporary conclusion after a considerable period of seeking, questioning, and erring. The document may be regarded as the successful outline of a greater work on evangelism which has been sorely needed for many years. To this task the Working Committee should direct its efforts in the future.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 37 ff.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Co-operation with other working committees

At its meetings in Davos and Herrenalb, the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism met with that of the Department of Missionary Studies for joint consultation on the study, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions,"⁶⁷ or, "The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men."⁶⁸ This study was jointly prosecuted by both the Departments represented by the Working Committees. It constitutes the only directly co-operative effort between these two closely related Departments and Working Committees and will have an important place in the Third Assembly.

At Herrenalb (1956) the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism and the Working Committee of the Department on the Laity consulted on questions of evangelism and *diakonia* under the theme, "Sharing Christ's Ministry in the World."⁶⁹

In July, 1957, the Department of the Laity organized a working conference of its own in New Haven, Conn. This conference characterizes the tendency in the work of the Department by its theme, "The Role of the Laity in the Missionary Outreach of the Church."⁷⁰ The conference dealt with the question of the significance due the various members of the congregation in the development of the church's true being—the preceding session of the conference had

⁶⁷ *Consultation on Christianity and Non-Christian Religions, Davos, Switzerland, July 21-25, 1955; cf. Minutes and Reports . . . Central Committee . . . Davos, 1955, pp. 43, 44 ff.* "The Relation of Christianity to non-Christian Religions," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, I, No. 1 (1955), 22-25. "The Word of the God and the Living Faiths of Men," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, II, No. 1 (1956), 25-29.

⁶⁸ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb, App. 2.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, App. 3.

⁷⁰ Cf. H. R. Weber, "The Spontaneous Missionary Church," *Laity*, IV (November 1957), 3-14. C. W. Nortier, "A 'Younger Church' Grows into Maturity," *Laity*, IV (November 1957), 15-24.

"The renewal of the church" as its theme⁷¹ — and therefore in evangelism. This question took the Department on the Laity into the immediate area of the Department on Evangelism. The work of the Department on the Laity is especially fruitful for questions of missionary action. The present director of this Department is H. R. Weber, a former missionary to Indonesia. H. Kraemer was chairman of the preparatory commission of Section VI at Evanston (*The Laity: The Christian in His Vocation*).

THE COMMISSION AND DIVISION ON WORLD MISSION
AND EVANGELISM
(PLANNING)

The combined deliberations of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council led to the plan of forming a Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (into which the Working Committees of the Departments on Evangelism and Missionary Studies would pass) and a Division on World Mission and Evangelism (within which the two Departments mentioned were to work apart from the Division of Studies). The Commission would then take a place next to the Commission on Faith and Order, and the Division would function as a fifth Division of the World Council.⁷²

The meeting of the International Missionary Council at Ghana basically agreed to this plan.⁷³ If it is accepted by the Third Assembly of the World Council in 1961, it is to be expected that the ecumenical discussion will receive a gen-

⁷¹ *The Renewal of the Church*. Report of a Consultation of the World Council of Churches, held at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 15-20, 1957.

⁷² The description of their functions is found in *Minutes and Reports of the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 30-August 7, 1957* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1957), pp. 118 ff.

⁷³ *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, Ghana, Dec. 28, 1957-Jan. 8, 1958* (London: International Missionary Council, 1958), pp. 85-88, 123-57.

inely missionary trend which will be stronger and above all will be broader than heretofore, because the discussion might then move into the realm of the missionary movement more than it has to date.

THE THIRD ASSEMBLY

The theme of the Third Assembly, which will be the first in Asia, is to be missionary in its basic features and determinative of the subthemes of the sections: "Unity," "Witness," and "Service." This will signify a great step forward for the ecumenical movement. However, if the ecumenical discussion on evangelism fails to adhere consistently and courageously to the subject, but permits itself to be influenced by the theologically insipid conceptions of evangelism prevalent in most churches, and even permits itself to be directed by their slight receptivity to missionary demands, it is always exposed to a softening process, even if only on its perimeter. In encountering the classical missionary situation and a church participating in classical missionary action, the representatives of the churches would be capable of experiencing, within the expanding outlook of the ecumenical movement, a greater understanding and capacity for the positions achieved in the discussion on evangelism. The degree of deterioration in the discussion will be correspondingly diminished and the discussion on evangelism will achieve more stability and greater boldness. If the preceding elaboration can be of help to that end, then it has fulfilled its task with regard to the ecumenical discussion.

VI

Results of the Discussion: Situation and Action in Evangelism

The presentation of the course of the discussion in connection with the efforts of the Secretariat, i.e., the Department on Evangelism in the World Council of Churches, suggested problems which will be enlarged on in the following pages. The question of the church was seen to be constantly central in discussing the situation confronting evangelism and the action to which evangelism is called. In fact, this question lies at the core of all the problems associated with evangelism.

But what is understood here by "situation" and "action"? "Situation" refers to everything encountered that stands under the promise of grace — church and world. "Action" refers, of course, to the embarkation of Christians, but more exactly it refers to their unqualified openness to the action of God directed toward the consummation of his purpose for the world.

1. THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH: SITUATION AND ACTION

The two ecumenical movements on Faith and Order and on Life and Work originated in the distress of a church broken in form and ineffective in service. Ever since the World Conference on Missions at Tambaram (1938), the church's distressing unfitness for missionary work has prompted the urgent call in the international missionary movement to the churches to become church. The statements issuing from the call are characterized by a more and more frightening awareness of the church's distress — and by deep love for

the church — and less by the style of academic ecclesiology. The discussion on evangelism, to which reference must once again be made, is meant only to provide direction, to expose and therefore to be provocative, to question and certainly to stimulate. In the ecumenical movement the question of the church is a burning question.

It was not by chance that the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches was oriented to the question of and prayer for renewal:

We pray for the churches' renewal as we pray for their unity.¹

Man's disorder finds its most pointed expression in the disorder of the Church itself. Its first act must therefore be, not condemnation of the world, but confession and contrition.²

The most recent greater ecumenical conference initiated by the World Council bore the title, "The Renewal of the Church."³ This is the fulcrum determining the focus and compass of the ecumenical intention and efforts from the beginning of the ecumenical movement to our day:

The Church [is] called to constant renewal. It is called to lay aside the old life and to conform to Christ in the renewal of its heart. It is called to look beyond its historical manifestations toward the full revelation of its new being in the returning Lord.⁴

In consequence, unity through "regeneration"⁵ is receiving mention in the ecumenical movement.

In this context, the renewal of the church has been understood as the *church becoming church*. The slogan, "Let

¹ "Report of Section I," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, I, 209.

² H. P. van Dusen, "General Introduction," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, I, 5-6.

³ *The Renewal of the Church*. Report of a Consultation of the World Council of Churches, held at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 15-20, 1957.

⁴ *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, August 15-28, 1952*, ed. O. S. Tomkins, p. 24.

⁵ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Renewal and Wholeness," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 392.

the Church be the Church," used at Oxford in 1937 and employed a great deal since, has been interpreted thus:

. . . the Church . . . must recover the eschatological dimension of its own existence. . . . Let the Church be the Church means: let the Church be the pilgrim people of God tasting and demonstrating the powers of the age to come.⁶

Let the Church be what it was called to be: the community of the new age, the spearhead of the Kingdom of God, the voice and the instrument of the Lord, who is King, Priest and Prophet.⁷

It is not a matter of indifference who formulated this statement and where it was used. Of course, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches is not the Council itself, and his formulations are not binding utterances on the churches assembled in the World Council. Nevertheless, this is the expression of a man who, because of his position, can certainly not represent an opinion so controversial in the ecumenical discussion that it would elicit the immediate disagreement of a wide circle. In addition, the third sentence in the quotation above was in the report of the General Secretary to the Central Committee of the World Council — and, what is more, in connection with a survey of the development of the Council from 1937 to 1957. These statements indicate, then, how firmly the thinking of Evanston and Willingen dominated the ecumenical discussion on the church. For the formulations, "pilgrim people," "community of the new age," "spearhead of the Kingdom of God," and "voice and instrument of the Lord," come from the Report of the Advisory Commission as well as from the Willingen reports. They are likewise the conceptions of the discussion on evangelism which most urgently and broadly pressed to the fore in the question of the church.

⁶ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Renewal of the Church* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1956), pp. 93, 124.

⁷ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Report of the General Secretary," *Minutes and Reports of the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches*, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 30–August 7, 1957, p. 81.

THE CHURCH AS CHURCH

In the most noteworthy part of the ecumenical discussion on evangelism, the question of the church as church rests on this presupposition: In principle the church (and each church) misunderstands itself if it conceives of the *Apostolicam*, next to the *Unam, Sanctam, Catholicam*, in its creed solely in the sense of the church's origin according to church history and in the sense of the church's fundamental doctrine according to the history of theology. The *Apostolicam* must be conceived in terms of the church's missionary function:

The Church is Apostolic. This means that it has been sent by God on a mission in the world and that it has been sent down through the ages in continuity. The evangelist stands in the great succession and participates in a mission which itself is also a part of the continuous action of God in history.⁸

The trend toward this position has been represented in the discussion chiefly by H. Kraemer and most ardently by J. C. Hoekendijk. In their work it is possible to recognize most clearly what is meant by "apostolic Church." J. C. Hoekendijk gave this conception an excessively sharp turn in the framework of the "Theology of the Apostolate." The criticism of J. C. Hoekendijk's effort made it clear to what extent the statement above on the "apostolic Church" has come to bear on the ecumenical discussion.⁹

⁸ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, V, Nos. 1-2 (November 1959), p. 18.

⁹ T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948), pp. 32, 34: "It is a pity that the word 'apostolic' has had its meaning narrowed in the course of centuries, so that instead of declaiming primarily the Church's commitment to a great missionary task, it merely registers a claim on the part of the Eastern and Roman Communions to be the lawful successors of the apostles." "The Church is 'apostolic' in virtue of doing the work of an Apostle" (cited by J. C. Hoekendijk in "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *International Review of Missions*, XLI [1952], 333). Manson writes in reply to K. E. Kirk (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry. Essays on the History and Doctrine of the Episcopacy* (New York: Morehouse-Goreham, 1947). In this book, "apostolic ministry" is understood in the sense of the Lambeth Quadrilateral as the ministry of "Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, transmitted by those having authority to transmit." *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, I, 65.

"Apostolic church" according to H. Kraemer

From the viewpoint of the church's active discontinuity with the world, which has eschatological basis, H. Kraemer has been demanding in the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk since 1936, and since 1938 in connection with the World Conference on Missions at Tambaram, that the church become conscious of its apostolic character by grasping its *apostolic function*. This function is evangelism to the ends of the earth with a view to the end of time.

The essential nature of the Church is that it is an apostolic body. It is this, not because its authority is derived from the apostles, for the apostles belong to the Church, but because in all its words and actions it ought to be a bearer of witness to God and His decisive creative and redeeming acts and purposes. To become conscious of its apostolic character is for the Church the surest way to take hold of its real essence and substance.¹⁰

Since then, the conception of the apostolic church, understood in terms of the apostolic nature of the gospel, has been dynamically oriented in the direction of the church's becoming church. It has received a missionary accentuation, and has been introduced into the ecumenical discussion. In such phrases as "... the apostolic character of the Church as a witnessing, evangelistic Church,"¹¹ "apostolic" has clearly become synonymous with "missionary": "... the missionary or apostolic obligation of the Church."¹² In order to understand H. Kraemer, a twofold point of reference is necessary. In the first place, he spiritedly stands within the tradition of Calvinism. In this tradition, as derived from Calvin, the church is conceived strictly as a popular church after the fashion of a denominational church. According to such a notion of the church, men are to be recognized as belonging

¹⁰ H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 2.

¹¹ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Asian Churches," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1950), 240.

¹² H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 23.

to the church through confession of faith, the example of their lives and participation in the sacraments; and in these three ways their membership in the church must be expressed. According to this tradition, moreover, pursuant to Calvin's thoughts on the *imitatio Christi*, the church experiences not only effective limitation but also vigorous activation. Time and again in Calvin, the "oppressive conception" breaks through "that the *world* cannot destroy the community of God, that, on the contrary, the faintheartedness and remissness of the believers themselves undo the kingdom of God," and that, consequently, enough heed cannot be paid to the necessity to let the church become a real, a "praying and contending host, one charged with a great responsibility with regard to its calling."¹³ It is precisely this conception, which appears so often in Calvin, that strongly affects H. Kraemer and the others.

The other point of reference in understanding H. Kraemer, and related to the first, consists in his view of the internal situation in which the church finds itself. It is a situation of the church's imprisonment within itself, of the church's lack of preparedness or even of its lack of ability in the face of its "world task." It is a situation of stagnation in the ecumenical movement that provokes and stamps its statements. There is (as they say in that movement) a "*prophetic*" summons.

It is clear that for H. Kraemer, as in the discussion on evangelism in general, it is not a matter of ecclesiology in the sense of an academic science. It is rather a matter of a "prophetic" outline of the church, of a call to contrition and a search for exodus.

If the statements on the church are approached with this idea in mind, then this must first of all be ascertained.¹⁴ "The question is not, Which is the true Church? It is rather, How

¹³ H. Berger, *Calvins Geschichtsauffassung* (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1955), p. 134.

¹⁴ We shall confine ourselves essentially to "The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World," in which the position has already been fully developed.

can the Church come true?"¹⁵ This way of posing the question is of basic importance. It implies that the viewpoint comprises, not the definition of the church, but rather the church's materialization; not the church in view of its existence as marked by some particular characteristic, but rather the churches as they are and in that they are. When the term "apostolic church" is at issue, this does not mean that the true church is "apostolic" (in its function), but rather that the church can only be what it is if it advances in an "apostolic" fashion.

In the direction of this idea lies the radical Christonomy within which the churches are viewed. As a community *sui generis* from Christ, the church is strictly eschatological. Therefore, it was from the beginning and is continually taken out of its own hands. The churches possess nothing of themselves, for they are grounded in "God's calling and grace," not in "their striving and their objects and ends," which lie exclusively in Christ and must be heard from his Word. By Christ it was placed on the world's crossroads, in fact, everywhere in the world. As "an interim-institution" it is bound to its commission. It exists "not for its own sake but for the sake of the world."¹⁶

This analysis is drawn against the background of the churches as they are. If Christ's commission consists in gathering his people in all the world with a view to the future kingdom, then no task more comfortable to the church can be assigned to it than to participate in this commission. This is not only the church's task as the church in the world, but its very life. The church lives by the missionary proclamation (evangelism) of Christ to all men. For the church to stand still, to tarry with the fruits of the commission of Christ, to content itself with fostering its own existence and to build for itself instead of being built in the

¹⁵ Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 419 (quotation).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 415 ff.

kingdom and the proclamation — all this means not only jeopardy for the church, but the very surrender of its life. The church is the true church only insofar as it serves in the ministry of the proclamation, and does so beyond its own bounds to the ends of the earth.

H. Kraemer calls this view of the church a “dynamic, prophetic-apostolic” view “according to the vision that is inherent in Biblical realism,”¹⁷ and designates the church regarded in this way as “apostolic.” In abridging — probably not without recognition of what is happening — the priestly ministry of Christ and the priestly-sacramental being of the church, the church is manifested “as a witness-bearing body”¹⁸ which does not have to continue the function of apostle — though this is not entirely clear — but must continue its ministry in the proclamation and must do this throughout its entire existence. Its creed must be an actual profession of faith.

The conception of “apostolic Church” in the sense of the apostolic function of the church, is less appropriate to an ecclesiological description than to a summons. And it consists simply in this, that the churches must not concentrate on themselves and allow the service of evangelism to be performed incidentally; but rather that, in recognition of their becoming the true church as a whole, the churches devote themselves to a task in which they participate in Christ and in the witness to his resurrection, which forms the basis for evangelism. Thus “apostolic church” is almost a definition of purpose. But the “apostolic church” is generally conceived with reference to the aim which Christ has for the world and intends to achieve through his church, though the aim is repeatedly overshadowed empirically. On this basis the conception of “apostolic church” receives its relevance despite dogmatic qualification. “Apostolic church” is intended to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 420-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

express simply that the church has been enlisted for service.

This viewpoint has defined the efforts of H. Kraemer in constructing a community in Holland, in his activity in evangelism there, and in his view of the proclamation as missionary. Closely associated with the idea of the "apostolic church" is the term "apostolate," which Hoekendijk employed in the discussion in close reference to Kraemer.

The apostolic church in the conception of the apostolate according to J. C. Hoekendijk

J. C. Hoekendijk has given very reserved but logical emphasis to the "theology of the apostolate," which has been developed particularly by A. A. van Ruler in reference to H. Kraemer and which could even be called "theology of evangelism" if conceived broadly enough. In dealing with the "theology of the apostolate," J. C. Hoekendijk arrives at a statement which he regards as fundamental. The church is neither more nor less than "a function" of the "apostolate." "The Church occurs only in the act of declaring the kingdom to the world. Beside this the Church possesses nothing of its own, nothing for itself."¹⁹ In his systematic schema, kingdom-gospel-apostolate-world, the conception of the church is missing; it is totally classified in and subordinated to the "Apostolate." The church can exist only "insofar as it shares in the Apostolate."²⁰ J. C. Hoekendijk himself realizes that a "complete turnover" results, "a total revolution in theology, with overwhelmingly wide perspectives."²¹ Also for H. Kraemer the conception of the "apostolate" is "evangelism in quite new terms."²² It is useful, indeed, in describing evangelism's direction.

¹⁹ J. C. Hoekendijk, "Mission und Oekumene (Die Botschaft von Jesus Christ in einer nicht-christlicher Welt)," *Sf M* (1952), p. 22.

²⁰ *Evangelism in Holland*, p. 35.

²¹ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), pp. 170, 162.

²² H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 101.

The programmatic formulation of the "total revolution in theology" shows the viewpoint from which J. C. Hoekendijk wishes to be understood and the way in which his provocative statement can be rendered fruitful. Understanding J. C. Hoekendijk is tantamount to understanding the movement which dominates the ecumenical discussion on evangelism through the question of the church as church.

J. C. Hoekendijk's point of departure is marked by his discussion of old German missionary science in its determination of the relationship between church and nation,²³ which was based on the conception of the popular church. His point of departure is developed from experiences which were grounded in a vital missionary intent for the churches as [in fact] pre-eminently popular or national or merely cultural.

J. Blauw correctly observes: "Hoekendijk wants the Church to push out of the narrowness of the nation into the broadness of the ecumenical as a messenger and witness of messianic salvation."²⁴

The tension in his statement is accordingly the tension between the biblical commission and the historical standstill of the church in churches which have succumbed to synthesis with the powers of their own locale. This tension clearly demonstrates the manner in which J. C. Hoekendijk thinks ecumenically, and genuinely so, on the basis of the act of evangelism.

Yet the question must be asked whether the radical solution of the tension can be theologically justified by the call to battle against the repose of the church in favor of its pure dynamism, a call which consists in a passionate though unjustified return to origins (the first generation).

For J. C. Hoekendijk the resolution of the tension which was and is constantly present in the discussion on evangelism

²³ J. C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingwetenschap*.

²⁴ J. Blauw, "De voornaamste trekken in het Missionaire denken in Nederland sinds 1945," *Heerban*, V (1952), p. 35.

and which has been evident in the sphere of Faith and Order since Lund (1952), consists in the "apostolate." The church is taken into the "apostolate" and is determined by it. The conceptions of the kingdom of God and of the world govern the conception of the "apostolate." The kingdom of God must be confronted with the world and must proclaim to the world and raise "the signs of the salvation of the kingdom, i.e., of messianic *shalom* in all its effusive diversity (Ps. 85) of peace, communion, justice, salvation, forgiveness, joy, etc."²⁵ This is the ministry and content of the "apostolate" as a "function in the kingdom." Through the "apostolate" this "function" seeks expression in the world, which, in turn, lies within the realm of the kingdom. "Through the apostolate the Gospel comes to fulfilment . . . and is brought to its destination. In the *apostolate* God continues to struggle with the world for the sake of the world."²⁶ The "apostolate" is therefore the issue of the crisis which entered the world with the gospel of the kingdom as the embracing lordship of God. It is the movement which, between kingdom and world in their contrariety, fills the messianic time between the first and second advents of the Lord of kingdom and world.

The "apostolate" is the proclamation of the gospel in conformity with its inner, eschatological dynamic, taking into account the bounds of space and time. Or rather, it is under the subject of the apostolate²⁷ of Jesus Christ a continuation of the "works of Christ . . . in the apostolic 'work of the Lord' (I Cor. 15:58; 16:10)." To participate in these works and therefore to work "*with the apostles*"²⁸ is the task and intrinsic value of evangelism. The apostolate, according to J. C. Hoekendijk, is thus removed from its restrictions by church history and the history of theology, but not from its historical limits. In a phrase pertinent to

²⁵ Hoekendijk, "Mission und Oekumene . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²⁶ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *op. cit.*, p. 333.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ J. C. Hoekendijk, *Mission—Heute!*, Sf M 1954, p. 9.

this point, K. Barth says that the "apostolate" means being "in the succession, in the school, under the authority, instruction and guidance of the apostles, in harmony with them because attentive to them and receptive to their commission."²⁹ It is given to the churches to fill the "apostolate." In participating in the "apostolate," the churches are apostolic churches.

Logically, the "apostolate" is the radical criterion of the churches:

Only *in actu*, in the performance of the apostolate . . . does the church exist.³⁰

The church can be church only if it allows itself to be received into this eschatological action of God and if it thus utilizes the *kairoi ethnon* (Luke 21:24) which are given us in God's incomprehensible patience. . . . Only as the 'church in the apostolate' may the gift of the Spirit be hoped for.³¹

For the church is truly church only when and insofar as it is wholly received and used in God's dealings with the *oikoumene*. . . . The church points away from itself to the kingdom; and for and through the kingdom it is used in the *oikoumene*.³²

Under the "apostolate" the church becomes mission:

A church which knows that it is a function of the apostolate and that the reason for its existence is therefore the proclamation of the kingdom to the world does not "pursue" missions. On the contrary, such a church *becomes* the mission, the living outreach of God towards the world. Thus a church without missions is an absurdity. As soon as the church is no longer mission in its entire existence, it affords proof that it has become debased into a temple or into some sort of society for religious self-culture.³³

Although this is to be said of the church, "without any particular emphasis, as if in parentheses,"³⁴ the church now

²⁹ K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV, Part I (Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischer buchhandlung, 1959), p. 798.

³⁰ Hoekendijk, "Mission und Oekumene . . .," p. 154.

³¹ J. C. Hoekendijk, *Krise*, p. 7.

³² Hoekendijk, "Mission und Oekumene . . .," pp. 153 ff.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁴ Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *op. cit.*, p. 325.

receives its intrinsic value as the bearer of evangelism, in which the church itself has become "mission" and "mission" has become "the structure of the Church:"³⁵ The church is "taken into the triumphal procession of the glorified Son of Man and on its way discovers that it walks amid the tokens of the coming Kingdom."³⁶ "Credo ecclesiam apostolicam!"³⁷ I.e., "Let the church be the mission."³⁸ Thus far comes J. C. Hoekendijk.

Criticism of J. C. Hoekendijk

Such a radical conversion of the church into a functioning body was bound to invite contradiction.

After H. Berkhof as early as 1947 had protested against a one-sided interpretation of the church of the apostolate,³⁹ he took a position opposed to J. C. Hoekendijk following the publication of the latter's works referred to above. "Christ's kingdom is not a circle with a single focal point, but rather an ellipse with two foci."⁴⁰ H. Berkhof defines the church as constructing itself in discipleship (Creed) on the doctrinal basis of the apostles and as realizing "the apostolate of the congregation" in witness (Mission). With formulations almost broaching the question whether the apostolate is not a matter of a hasty theologoumenon, he rejects J. C. Hoekendijk's conception of the church of the apostolate. In the construction of the church he calls for correct analysis of the relationship between the apostolic ground and the apostolic

³⁵ Hoekendijk, *Krise*, p. 5.

³⁶ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 170.

³⁷ Hoekendijk, *Krise*, p. 5.

³⁸ Hoekendijk, "The Church in Missionary Thinking," *op. cit.*, p. 335.

³⁹ H. Berkhof, "De Apostoliciteit der Kerk," *Nederlandse Theologisch Tijdschrift*, II (1947), 146-60, 193-201; in conjunction with this there is now available H. R. Weber, "The Laity in the Apostolic Church," *Ecumenical Review*, X (1957), 286-93.

⁴⁰ H. Berkhof (In de Waagschall, 1951), p. 260.

commission: "Whoever today plays off the church's task, in the question of its renewal, against its being will degenerate into an evil confessionalism."⁴¹

L. Newbigin proceeds from similar presuppositions. He stresses that the church is more than an instrument "to make others Christians." In itself the church is a "foretaste of Heaven," i.e., the "community of the Holy Spirit who is the earnest of our inheritance." For L. Newbigin the church's commission to the world results from the following:

Precisely because the Church is here and now a real foretaste of heaven she can be the witness and instrument of the kingdom of heaven. . . . A mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate.⁴²

Finally, S. C. Neill correctly attests that J. C. Hoekendijk has posed a false alternative:

The concept of the Church as institution and the Church as missionary body are not alternatives, but simply two facets that must be held together in the reality of one Church.⁴³

The question of the church as church under the impetus of J. C. Hoekendijk

The criticism of J. C. Hoekendijk, though, quite clearly reveals that exception is taken solely to his one-sided and excessive subtilization of the problem of the church by consistently employing the "theology of the apostolate." What J. C. Hoekendijk unmistakably intended is clear: the servitude of the churches. W. Andersen stresses the point: "The supporters of the missionary enterprise will be well-advised to pay close attention to this utterance."⁴⁴ S. C. Neill's book,

⁴¹ Berkhof, "De Apostoliciteit . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 201; likewise, H. N. Ridderbos, "De Apostoliciteit van de Kerk volgens het Nieuwe Testament," *De Apostolische Kerk* (Kampen: J. H. Koele, 1954), p. 78.

⁴² Newbigin, *The Household of God*, pp. 147-48.

⁴³ Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ W. Andersen, *Toward a Theology of Missions*, p. 38.

The Unfinished Task "is a result of the writer's attempt to grapple with the problems that Dr. Hoekendijk has raised."⁴⁵ S. C. Neill detects the keystone, not only of J. C. Hoekendijk's program (it appears to be this), but also of the whole question of the church as church in the discussion on evangelism: "If the Church were true to itself, there would be no problem."⁴⁶

S. C. Neill's book also intimates that J. C. Hoekendijk's statement is misconstrued at its core if it is only examined dogmatically, though this is of course necessary initially. If the connection between J. C. Hoekendijk's statement and his aim is kept in mind, it will become obvious that, as with H. Kraemer, the statement is intended to be, and even is, anything but purely dogmatic. It is rather a renewed cry, a call to wakefulness in the situation preceding Willingen and Evanston. In this situation J. C. Hoekendijk was not alone in his fear that the movement which the churches had entered with the ecumenical movement would be smothered in its point of departure. For S. C. Neill also the task is "to recall the Church to a rediscovery of its own nature."⁴⁷ Indeed, the whole discussion is struggling with the "inner petrification"⁴⁸ of the churches, from which the discussion suffers. If J. C. Hoekendijk is to be understood, it must be in this context. The attempt to understand him, though, leads to the dilemma, into which his critics fell, of having to assent on one side and to dissent on the other. This is the theological situation if no recourse to traditional ecclesiology is intended or possible.

Without a doubt, J. C. Hoekendijk's energetic work has had a powerful effect. W. Andersen calls attention to the openness of the work of the theological section at Willingen (which receives comment below). He points out that J. C.

⁴⁵ S. C. Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, p. 21.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Hoekendijk's attack on the "church-centric conception" of missions contributed to that openness. J. C. Hoekendijk especially prevented evangelism from being precipitately anchored in the church itself. Otherwise, the church might be assigned a place to which it is not entitled according to the witness of the Holy Scripture. W. Andersen reflects J. C. Hoekendijk's thinking when he writes:

The Church is not the true centre of gravity towards which missionary thinking should be directed. In a theology of the missionary enterprise we have to turn back to the self-revelation of the triune God in Jesus Christ; only so can we discover the true and final principles which we seek.⁴⁹

On the question of the "apostolic church" J. C. Hoekendijk is seeking to make explicit something often present in the discussion, though unexpressed. He undertakes this in close connection with the resolute effort of Evanston on questions of eschatology. With regard to these questions the decision was reached at Evanston that the church must be regarded only under an eschatological aspect, the eschatological aspect of hoping exclusively in its Head. Of course this movement surmounted J. C. Hoekendijk's "theology of the apostolate." If the conception of the "apostolic church" will endure at all, it will, at best, maintain itself but feebly.

The view of the missionary ("apostolic") church

In the ecumenical discussion on the questions of Faith and Order since Lund (1952), the following positions determinative of the discussion have been advocated. In the report of Lund it is said that "the Church by its very nature is an evangelizing fellowship with an inescapable missionary obligation."⁵⁰ The preparatory pamphlet for Section I at Evanston reads:

⁴⁹ Andersen, *Toward a Theology of Missions*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Lund, 1952, p. 31.

When Augustana VII thus puts so much stress on the pure proclamation of the Gospel, it does not mean that the possession of doctrinal statements is decisive, but it means that in what is proclaimed Christ Himself comes to us, through the Holy Spirit creating faith in us and so establishing His Kingdom.⁵¹

E. Schlink expands on this statement:

The Church does not exist where men possess Bible, Confession and Ministry, and yet keep silent, but rather where on the basis of Scripture, and in agreement with our Fathers and brethren, the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments celebrated, where the voice of Christ is heard and Christ offers Himself.⁵²

When continued in the direction of our problem, these quotations may be used together with the summary of a paper on the relationship between the "catholic"⁵³ doctrine of the church and the conception of the church now growing in the ecumenical movement: "... the Church is both eschatological and historical ... obviously the eschatological is prior."⁵⁴

J. C. Hoekendijk writes that "ecclesiology can be no more than a single paragraph in Christology (the *messianic* dealings with the world)."⁵⁵ In the knowledge, therefore, that all ecclesiology must ultimately be Christology, the discussion was and is able to be fruitfully continued. The guideline of thought must accordingly be characterized by the statement that the church is not "an end in itself,"⁵⁶ but rather "appointed ... to be always a pilgrim Church."⁵⁷

⁵¹ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36; cf. p. 27.

⁵³ L. Newbigin, *Von der Spaltung zur Einheit* (Stuttgart: Basel, 1956), p. 110: "The fundamental error of the catholic doctrine of the Church is ... that it subordinates the eschatological to the historical."

⁵⁴ W. Nicholls, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Doctrine of the Church," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 46; cf. O. S. Tomkins, *Um die Einheit der Kirche*, pp. 55, 61.

⁵⁵ J. C. Hoekendijk, "Mission und Oekumene . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ D. T. Niles, "Our Search for Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1950), 358.

⁵⁷ Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, p. 19.

The statements in the ecumenical discussion on evangelism move along this guideline of thought in attempting to determine from a biblical view of the church the next steps toward the renewal of the church.

In the Report of Section II of Evanston it is said that evangelism "is the place where the Church discovers itself in its true depth and outreach."⁵⁸ This statement is based on the Willingen conviction that the church can have true being only eschatologically and consequently only in the missionary enterprise, and that it can only thus be truly church. "There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world."⁵⁹ D. T. Niles pertinently explains the matter this way:

The Church is holy because it is the instrument of God's mission to the world. He separates it from the world in order that He might address it to the world. Let a Church cease to be missionary and it ceases to be holy, it ceases to fulfill the function for which it was wrought. Spiritual holiness comes as a result of the Church being true to its primary function. A missionary Church is constantly renewed in its life because God is working through it and in it. Self-preservation is the theme of a constantly recurring crisis in the life of the Church.⁶⁰

The renewal of the church can be expected only when the churches give themselves to evangelism! This is one criterion.

The other criterion is complementary to the first. Evangelism, as the hour demands it, is only possible through the renewal of the churches so that they become the Church! Here the distress sensed in the discussion is the greatest:

... the evangelistic question is a boomerang. The Church which would call the world to order is suddenly called to order itself. The question which it would throw into the world: "Do you not know that you belong to Christ?" comes back as an echo. The Church discovers that it cannot truly evangelize, that its message is unconvincing unless it lets

⁵⁸ *The Evanston Report*, p. 100.

⁵⁹ *Missions under the Cross*, ed. N. Goodall, p. 190.

⁶⁰ D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 76.

itself be transformed and renewed, unless it becomes what it believes it is. Thus evangelism, if taken seriously, will force the Churches to pray and work for that radical renewal which will make them "into letters from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God."⁶¹

The demand is for the church to be the missionary.

D. T. Niles has succeeded in giving pointed expression to the central thought of the discussion, fashioning it after the biblical conception of the body of Christ:

The Church is not a messenger by substitution as if it acts on behalf of God. It is rather a messenger by *embodiment*, God is always acting, and the Church embodies this acting of God in a special way.⁶²

In this sentence the dynamic is recognized which is contained in the biblical conception of the church as the bearer of evangelism: because it is God in Jesus Christ who is the evangelist and because the church is the body of Christ, the church can now stake itself completely on the commission from Christ to all for whom he died. Without concern for its "rear guard," without apprehension for its "home base," and without fear of its path of suffering, the Church can now devote itself to the "abrahamitic adventure." It is now able "to go forth in faith to an unknown destiny . . . unprotected, consciously and joyful,"⁶³ "with the energy born of good hope, looking confidently for the day of Christ's glorious return."⁶⁴

In the new liturgy of the Church of South India there occurs a prayer in which the following is said by the whole people: "Thy death we commemorate; Thy resurrection we confess; Thy second coming we await. O Lord, have mercy upon us." As I have said this in many congregations in South India I have come to know that the health of the

⁶¹ "Editorial," *Ecumenical Review* II (1949), p. 2.

⁶² Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 80 (my italics).

⁶³ H. Kraemer, *Die Kommunikation des christlichen Glaubens* (Zurich, 1958), p. 92.

⁶⁴ L. Newbigin, *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 33.

Church depends upon our ability to say with our whole heart: "Thy second coming we await."⁶⁵

In the Diocese of Dornakal in India, it is part of the service of baptism for every convert to place his hand upon his head and say solemnly, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel."⁶⁶

The following is mentioned in retrospect and in prospect. The point of the discussion on evangelism with regard to the question of the church is the attempt to overcome an obstinate dilemma. For the most part, the same thing also applies to the discussion on Faith and Order insofar as it has felt the impact of the discussion on evangelism. The question has been opened as to the church's *true being* which is embodied in the church's *acceptance of service*. Many specific problems are unresolved, but the general direction is marked. Aside from terminological and theological difficulties, the following statement by H. Kraemer is pertinent when understood eschatologically: The Church is "of apostolic character . . . , a community for the service and salvation of the world . . . , which identifies itself completely with the suffering and distress of the world."⁶⁷

Everything depends on the continuation of the work done from this point of departure. Perhaps the appropriate course results from the simple assertion, "A Church which really remains steadfastly in the apostles' teaching becomes *eo ipso* a missionary Church."⁶⁸

The churches have been seen in their reality. They are captive churches. The question of faith which is directed to them throws the statements above into even bolder relief.

⁶⁵ L. Newbigin in *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle, Switzerland, August 4-11, 1951*, p. 16.

⁶⁶ D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 52.

⁶⁷ Kraemer, citing *Evangelism in Holland*, p. 9. The eschatological stress is important; otherwise "apostolic" could be misused as meaning, e.g., "on active service" (A. T. Dale, *Rediscovering the Local Church*. [London: S. C. M. Pr., 1943], p. 29).

⁶⁸ H. R. Weber, "The Laity in the Apostolic Church," *Ecumenical Review*, X (1958), 289.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCHES

The introduction to Part Two of this book maintained that the situation in which evangelism finds itself is not primarily one of confrontation — at any rate, not in connection with the considerations of the ecumenical discussion on evangelism. The situation is rather that of the churches themselves, which are called to evangelism and which do not, on the whole, accept this call. They obviously do not even hear the call. W. A. Visser 't Hooft writes:

We find churches set up with structures designed for a task of conservation, rather than for a dynamic task. And therefore we come to a point where there is a complete dichotomy between what we know from our Bible the Church ought to be and what the churches are in practice.⁶⁹

This statement must now be developed. Just as no systematic analysis is given of this position in the discussion, so our presentation can focus only on side lights. What is experienced in evangelism in painfully broad connections is marked only by specific points.

The problem is basically this: The judgments which were passed under the "radical realism"⁷⁰ demanded by H. Kraemer, over against the situation of the churches and congregations, are not placed into the proper perspective unless they are viewed on the decisive background of the ideas surrounding the biblical image of the church, namely, of the church which in its evangelism extends itself in suffering to the world and its end. These judgments are misunderstood if it is forgotten that amid the sharpest judgments the churches themselves remain churches for their critics and are believed to lie within God's patience and promise as objects of renewal by Him; and this in spite of the churches' guilt and

⁶⁹ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Mission of the Church," *Student World*, I (1957), 323.

⁷⁰ Kraemer to Bilheimer (*Documents on Theology for Evangelism*).

the question whether they themselves might not have aroused God's anger. Only in this way can the following sentence be properly understood: "The Church as it stands is itself, in most places, the stumbling block for the spread of the Gospel."⁷¹

H. Kraemer must also be understood along these lines when he quite pointedly writes:

We are under the delusion that the so-called problem of evangelism can mainly be solved by the direct way either of good theology or of good and new methods or of very well planned actions. All these three things are indispensable [but] our real predicament is just this that the present situation of the Church within the general atmosphere and tendency of the modern world make it impossible to put our main trust in the direct dealing with the problem. Let me add . . . that under "good theology" I mean also the important matter of what is called "new ways of communication" and a "new language for translating the Christian message in a language that is at least understandable in the present time in so far as by verbal transmission the Christian message can *ueberhaupt* be made understandable." . . . The church should not only and not in the first place approach the whole problem of evangelism under the angle of producing "good theology" and new methods, but *to become prepared for drastic changes in its own life and outlook!* . . . If Christians and the churches take the courage to realize this and meet it with determination and simplicity, not only by words or theology or methods, but by acts of quite a new imaginative kind, then I am convinced we have in our time an opportunity for a fresh start of Christianity as never before. However, if we let pass this conjuncture, then I think humanly speaking for many decades the chance of the church will be lost. Therefore we must learn to formulate the whole problem of evangelism in quite new terms, in terms which force the church in the first place to reconsider its own reality very severely. Our famous good theology of today is becoming far too much a sort of fondled treasure about which we are happy. This I regard as a temptation of the devil himself!⁷²

H. Kraemer's statement is the classical reference for the thesis that the situation is primarily that of the churches,

⁷¹ H. D. L. Abraham, "Church and Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XLV (1956), 171.

⁷² Kraemer to Bilheimer (my italics); cf. J. C. Hoekendijk, *The Evangelization of Man in Modern Mass Society* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1949), p. 12. *Theology for Evangelism*, ¶¶ 112-13.

insofar as they find themselves in their own bondage as religious and sociological institutions.

The following instances were emphasized in the discussion:

The churches in themselves

Throughout the world the churches show "a marked . . . inveterate tendency . . . to localize, to stabilize, to organize" themselves. What is more, they occasionally let it be understood "that the Church has nothing to do but attend respectably to its local responsibilities."⁷³ In the ecumenical discussion this attitude on the part of the churches is generally regarded as the *distortion* of the churches — unfortunately, mostly without indicating in what concrete relationship the organization necessary for the missionary service of church and congregation consists. From this distortion results the "failure"⁷⁴ of the churches as a decisive force in the world.

The state of affairs is manifested in these specific features:

1) It appears as a disquieting symptom that many of the "young" churches which have become independent have not in fact become missionary churches. They live simply by "carrying on":⁷⁵

It is sad but true that even in the younger churches the second generation of Christians becomes established and immobile. And for a next generation, Christian life has often already become an unexciting business of routine.⁷⁶

The Americo-Liberians were Christians, and they have held their faith. They have built their churches and prepared their own ministers. But they made no attempt to evangelize the original inhabitants. All that has been done in this respect is the result of mission endeavour.⁷⁷

⁷³ S. C. Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, pp. 19–20.

⁷⁴ J. Ellul, "The Situation in Europe," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, III, 59.

⁷⁵ H. Kraemer, "On Tour Through South-East Asia," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 126.

⁷⁶ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 163.

⁷⁷ S. A. J. Pratt, "Spiritual Conflicts in a Changing African Society," *Ecumenical Review*, VIII (1956), 161.

The observation which must be made of the Western churches and congregations is therefore applicable also to the churches of the East, whose founders generally had the image of a missionary church before them, which in many instances was not realized.

2) When, in one instance, the reason is said to be "that the spiritual level which the congregations have attained is still so low that there is no inner urge to go and witness for Christ,"⁷⁸ this would apply only in part and within the qualifications of a particular milieu. The reasons are rather to be sought elsewhere. For example:

The Creoles had education; they clung tenaciously to a mid-Victorian type of Western culture; they held high appointments in almost every walk of life, and, what was more, they had the Gospel. Unfortunately they quickly developed a spirit of patronizing superiority toward the indigenous tribesmen who formed, and still form, the great majority of the population of Sierra Leone.⁷⁹

The reasons lie therefore in the realm of education and culture, in social standing and in the consciousness of superiority which is intermixed with possession of religion. With reference to the churches in the West the same state of affairs may be described as

Our more present disobedience both in continuing to gather into the Church those whom we do not call by the Gospel, and in withholding from those who have been so gathered adequate instruction and training in the exercise of genuine Christian vocation.⁸⁰

3) When the church was not conceived as the church under these conditions, then the next step was regarded as unavoidable:

⁷⁸ Abraham, "Church and Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁷⁹ Pratt, "Spiritual Conflicts in a Changing African Society," *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁸⁰ H. R. Niebuhr, "The Disorder of Man in the Church of God," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, I, 82. This quotation is consciously given a character provocative of discussion.

The main line of opposition to missions in Scotland does not come from the pagan masses outside the Church. By far the most crushing and bewildering conflict arises within the Church when the demands of Christ upon His people are heard by those for whom religion is a matter of comfortable and respectable conformity. The devastating thing about this sort of conflict within the Church is that it cannot be concealed from those who are finding their way back after years outside.⁸¹

A church can make an idol of itself, nurturing its own enclosed parish prosperity, its own survival, its own "comfort." The God of biblical revelation can be replaced by a local Baal.⁸²

The churches' sociological captivity results from their religious captivity, which perverts the message, and becomes a genuine captivity of the churches.

The sociological captivity of the churches

The sociological captivity of the churches signifies their *isolation* from the world. In what measure this is purely self-isolation and not primarily a limitation imposed upon the churches by an inimical milieu is made clear by the fact that most congregations are not in a position or are quite unwilling to take upon themselves that to which their Lord has called them. In the *denaturalization* which thereby becomes apparent in the life of the congregation, there is manifested in full scale the "introverted church,"⁸³ which is in danger of disavowing itself as a church. This the real problem in the analysis of the situation of the churches. The discussion of their situation is constantly trained on this problem. In it the sociological problem of the churches is clearest; and here the question of the renewal of the church becomes the most direct.

⁸¹ *The Evanston Report*, p. 26. Also, *Evangelism in Scotland*, p. 36. Cf. T. Allan, *The Face of My Parish* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1956), p. 31.

⁸² T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism. The Mission of the Church to those Outside her Life," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

... the question was discussed in a church in Hamburg whether one should venture to undertake a missionary campaign with the help of the unusual new methods which, by using film and theatre, invade the secular realm. One of the pastors who was critical of such an enterprise said, "If we don't want this enterprise merely to make a 'godly noise,' but really to call men to God, then our church cannot remain what it is." He was referring by this to the experience, also had elsewhere, that after a new campaign amongst working-class people it has turned out that the church in its present state cannot serve as a home for these newly-won groups.⁸⁴

The reason for this fact is to be sought in the progressive *contraction of the churches' milieu*, which is causally connected with their isolation. According to J. C. Hoekendijk, this condition is the church's "bourgeois ghetto" in the West. in which the church is "a foreign body in society"⁸⁵ — "isolated and indistinguishable,"⁸⁶ "condemned to ineffectiveness. and stranded in the backwaters, out of the main current of historical development."⁸⁷

J. C. Hoekendijk's meaning is given strongest expression in his remarks on evangelism in Europe, which he sees in the context of the situation presented by the churches and against the background of the problem of Islamic missions.⁸⁸ In fact, in this setting the problem becomes extremely pointed. The Islamic world has completed what Europe is just preparing to do. In the Islamic world the churches have become "millet," groups strictly separated through their background from their surroundings. From these churches a call to Muslims signifies nothing but "passage from one nationality to another." In such a setting missions become on the whole impossible. The rigid milieu of the congregations isolated from the community corresponds to the "millet"!

⁸⁴ W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 404-05.

⁸⁵ J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1949), 135.

⁸⁶ Niles, "Evangelism Secretariat" (MS).

⁸⁷ Hoekendijk, "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *loc. cit.*

⁸⁸ Hoekendijk, "Het apostolaat in Europa in het licht van enkele ervaringen van de Islam-zending," *Nederlandse Theologisch Tijdschrift*, VII (1952), 329.

This aspect renders the following statements especially serious:

[The] whole pattern of Church life belongs to a particular milieu and that milieu is under rapid change.⁸⁹

It is not an accident that in modern society the church finds itself at home hardly anywhere except in the suburbs, where to some extent the life of yesterday lingers on. It is not at home in the factory, where the pulsations of new life are felt.⁹⁰

The situation sharply outlined here elicits the question whether an unconscious enslavement of conscience is not demanded under sociological pressure instead of a genuine decision of conscience under the gospel. In view of this situation the sentence, which was later struck from the Evanston Report, could be written: "There is considerable doubt as to whether the Church in many cases is actually the place where people will meet the living Christ."⁹¹ Consequently, the churches are called into question by evangelism, which sees a world in distress but cannot rely on the churches.

Naturally men ask, and we are driven to ask ourselves, how the Church can proclaim deliverance to the captives, when it has been so incontrovertibly demonstrated that the Church itself lives in captivity.⁹²

Man before the churches

The Report of Section II at Amsterdam states:

What does the World see, or think it sees, when it looks at the Church? It is a Church divided, and in its separated parts are often found hesitancy, complacency, or the desire to domineer. It is a Church that has largely lost touch with the dominant realities of modern life, and

⁸⁹ D. T. Niles, "Our Search for Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1951), 358.

⁹⁰ Hoekendijk, "Het apostolaat in Europa . . .," *loc. cit.*; the same thing is reported of the city congregations in India. Cf. *Evangelism in India*, pp. 44-45. This assertion applies to the U.S.A., but with qualifications (cf. *The Evanston Report*, pp. 41 ff.). Obviously, only occasionally typical examples are given here.

⁹¹ Entwurf Evanston II (MS 68).

⁹² Hoekendijk, "Het apostolaat in Europa . . .," *loc. cit.*

still tries to meet the modern world with language and a technique that may have been appropriate two hundred years ago. It is a Church that, by its failure to speak effectively on the subject of war, has appeared impotent to deal with the realities of the human situation. It is a Church accused by many of having been blind to the movement of God in history, of having sided with the vested interests of society and state, and of having failed to kindle the vision and to purify the wills of men in a changing world. It is a Church under suspicion in many quarters of having used its missionary enterprise to further the foreign policies of states and imperialistic designs of the powers of the West. Much in this indictment may be untrue; but the Church is called to deep shame and penitence for its failure to manifest Jesus Christ to men as He really is.⁹³

As a specific instance of the offence taken at the church, the lack of *koinonia* in the life of the church is repeatedly mentioned in the ecumenical discussion. This is done with all the more rigor when the yearning for a genuine communion among men is recognized by the church. But ordinarily the communion within the congregation is so repellent that in this connection the Word spoken by the church is the actual *skandalon*:

In this stirring interest in religion it is the Church that . . . remains the stumbling block. Among the more indifferent the mere mention of the Church evokes comments too ribald to print. Among those definitely interested there is a feeling of frustration regarding the church. There appears to be a lack of attraction for the intellectual in contemporary institutional Church life. So much of the activity of the average congregation appears to him trivial and irrelevant.⁹⁴

The problem of evangelism in Scotland is not that the Gospel is not preached or is not intelligible, nor is it that the churches lack the means in men and organisation: it is that the mass of the people do not see any particular attraction in the life of the Church. They see in it a way of life that is respectable and worthy but irrelevant to their problems and their interests.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 213–14.

⁹⁴ *Evangelism in Scotland*, p. 24; cf. *Evangelism in India*, p. 51.

⁹⁵ *Evangelism in Scotland*, p. 51.

The churches in secularization

In the ecumenical discussion on evangelism the conclusion drawn from these findings, which are representative in a horizontal sense, is the same among participants in the discussion who differ widely in their church origin and spiritual affiliation. S. C. Neill said:

. . . the trouble is that the Church has drawn so close to the world through clinging to property, through inner discord and through worldly ambition that it no longer voices a sharp and definite call to men.⁹⁶

H. Kraemer writes:

The truth is that everywhere the Church is thoroughly secularized, just as much as the world, although in a different way. The Church's secularization is even more serious than the world's, because one is largely blinded to it by the "holy" or "sacral" cloak in which everything is disguised.⁹⁷

In connection with this statement, a question is raised which focuses upon itself all the gravity with which the situation of the churches is regarded in the discussion and which at the same time tries to throw light on what lies behind the fact "that at no point and in no land has the Church been able to achieve a real advance on a broad front"⁹⁸ among men alienated from the church.

⁹⁶ S. C. Neill, "Warum die Kirchen nicht christlicher sind," *Rede in Amsterdam* ("Amsterdamer Dokumente. Berichte und Reden auf der Weltkirchenkonferenz in Amsterdam 1948" [Bethel, 1948]), p. 169. In evaluation of the inquiries in R. H. T. Thompson, *The Church's Understanding of Itself* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1957), pp. 84, 97, 83, it is said: "The values of church members are for the most part drawn from the other secular groups in which they have membership. In general this means that the ways of correct behaviour and values are one or other of the species of middle-class values, exalted by their association with the Church." "The parish church is unable to provide the necessary environment as a nursery of sanctity in which the individual can stabilize his belief against the fluctuations of circumstances, the weaker members receive support and encouragement and the more vigorous, discipline and guidance." "The Church was not seen as a fellowship by the majority of members, nor as involving obligations."

⁹⁷ H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 84.

⁹⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 180.

May we not say that God in His mercy, will not allow the world to come into the Church as she now is? That it would be dreadful if our churches as at present conditioned, were thronged with people seeking membership? May it not be that God will not allow the Church to convert the world, unless the Church is adequate to the needs of the world—that He won't let us succeed at the wrong task?⁹⁹

H. Kraemer poses the demand for the "indirect approach"¹⁰⁰ under such viewpoints, which elucidate the precise way in which the question of the church came to move in the direction of the "apostolic" church. To work on the renewal of the church is the primary task in the performance of evangelism. But this demand is imbedded in a further context of genuinely theological character, the context of the question of faith addressed to the churches, which is the question of their "conversion."¹⁰¹ For, because the world, confronted by its end, is at stake, the church, the body of Christ in the time of the end, is at stake.

THE QUESTION OF FAITH ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES

If the attempt is made to see the strata incapable of literary expression and appearing in the documents allusively at best, something else will be realized about the discussion. This may be seen in the presuppositions implicit in a statement by W. Freytag in which the discussion is related to the development of the church in the missionary areas of Asia and Africa:

⁹⁹ E. R. Wickham, *The Problem of Evangelism in the Mass Society of the Industrial World* (Study Conference on Evangelism, 1949), p. 11; similar citation in Hoekendijk, "Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," p. 139; cf. "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," p. 18. In E. R. Wickham's book, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1957), the author depicts the progressive secularization of the church and the influential factors, caused by the church for the most part, in this process. The book not only offers a broad historical analysis of the relation between church and people in Sheffield, but also (pp. 261 ff.) delineates very precisely fundamental lines for the missionary structure of a local congregation in an industrial society. See below.

¹⁰⁰ Kraemer to Bilheimer.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

All preaching of the Gospel is a step towards something new. . . . By virtue of the Gospel something new always comes into being. . . . We only deceive ourselves if we assume that exactly the same church grows up abroad as we have it here. . . . There always comes into being another . . . church.¹⁰²

The discussion therefore survives through awareness of the mystery of the proclaimed Word. When the Word is proclaimed in a missionary fashion — taking “missionary” in the sense used here — the Word renews both bearer and hearer. Whatever is issued in this discussion as a call to the churches, must be understood on this basis embedded in hope. Under no circumstances is this a call to mere animation and activity; it is a call to the church itself, to the very heart of the matter!

Tactics or faith?

In defining precisely the true being of the churches, the *authority* of the church is obviously at stake. H. Kraemer has asserted: “The Church has lost her authority.”¹⁰³ By this he substantiates the churches’ destructive failure in their proclamation to the world. What is meant by the loss of authority is specified by R. S. Bilheimer:

It is easy to answer: “Our authority is Jesus Christ.” But to do so is perhaps merely to evade the real problem. In what sense is Jesus Christ our authority, and to what do we appeal? Do we appeal to men *verbally* in the name of Jesus Christ, but *actually* in the name of the activities of the Church, saying to them that here they will find a wonderful fellowship, or that the Church is necessary to civilization, or that the Church provides security? If so, we have shifted our authority from Jesus Christ to the works of the Church. Or do we appeal on the authority of what the Church says about Jesus Christ, urging men to accept the eternal truths, and thus stand on the side of the great company who choose truth from falsehood. If so we have shifted from an appeal which stems from the authority of Christ, to one which rests upon the authority of dogma. Or is our authority the authority of the virtuous life exemplified by Jesus, and which “pays”? If so we have again shifted our base of authority.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Freytag, “Mission and Unity,” *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 408–09.

¹⁰³ Kraemer to Bilheimer.

¹⁰⁴ R. S. Bilheimer, “Concerning ‘Theology for Evangelism,’” *Documents on “Theology for Evangelism,”* pp. 2–3.

Thus the church suffers a loss of authority when its first concern in evangelism, due to a subtle misconception, is itself. If this is done covertly, it is all the more persistent. Or, to express it more exactly, when it is primarily interested in its own expansion, in the confirmation of the institution as church,¹⁰⁵ and in the recovery of lost territory and prestige. This means the attempt of the church to recover those elements which J. C. Hoekendijk so energetically assailed and from which resulted his (questionable, to be sure) subordination of the church to the "apostolate." R. S. Bilheimer draws this conclusion: "The churches lack His basic authority."¹⁰⁶

The document of Bossey (1958) states: "We have not come to Christ the servant and let Him put His distinctive form upon us."¹⁰⁷ The authority of the church is its *crucified, resurrected, and coming* Lord. The call to the churches to be truly and essentially church is the call of the church to its Lord:

The more the Church — and that means us, as members of His Body — is conformed to her Lord, the more she enters the fellowship of His sufferings. The suffering of the Church is an essential trend of her life. Her existence does not depend in the first place on what her enemies do to her. To be in the world and yet not of the world means suffering. . . . As long as the Church fails to walk His way of suffering, her testimony is not true and real and has not the seal of the Lord, who sends her forth.¹⁰⁸

No Church can proclaim a Saviour who is a suffering servant, unless that Church also shares in the sufferings and the service of its Saviour. It must give evidence . . . of its own peculiar authority.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, pp. 404-12.

¹⁰⁶ Bilheimer, "Concerning 'Theology for Evangelism,'" *op. cit.*, p. 4. What Allan (*The Face of My Parish*, pp. 41-42) concluded from his evangelistic experience might be added here: "The secularism of the Church has not only produced a culture pattern which separates it from the mass of the people. It has resulted in something far more bewildering. It has so compromised the message of the New Testament to fit in with its own standards that the gospel proclaimed by this Church is not regarded as a serious alternative to the rival ideologies which are bidding to-day for the allegiance of men."

¹⁰⁷ *Theology for Evangelism*, ¶ 38.

¹⁰⁸ W. Freytag, "The Articulate Word," in *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁹ Bilheimer, "Concerning 'Theology for Evangelism,'" *op. cit.*, p. 3.

The gift of authority can come to pass only in accepting His suffering for the world. For in this lies the end to the churches' self-display, in which the churches fail to be true through the curtailment of their ("apostolic") dimension toward the world. This is the beginning of self-surrender to the exemplary work of Christ and his apostles.

At this point in the ecumenical discussion, the "conversion" of the church is mentioned under the rubric of a "radical self-criticism."¹¹⁰ For H. Kraemer the demand for conversion involves admonishment against tactics. The churches would be indulging in tactics were they to settle or to resolve their present dilemma by trying in "intelligent adaptations"¹¹¹ to lessen the gap which makes communication between them and those confronting them difficult or impossible. Such an effort would be tantamount to the attempt to make the churches, by way of repair, more effective in the face of present needs. (From this follows Kraemer's fundamental demand for the biblical self-understanding of the churches). Such tactical concerns, says H. Kraemer, would lead the churches only to persist in their secularization; indeed, they would strengthen their secularization: "Living by tactics means to remain . . . well established in its place, trying to make inroads into the world, but not wandering in faith . . . to unknown goals."¹¹²

At this point there irrepressibly moves into a central position the question of faith on which the church rests and from which alone the gift of authority can be expected. H. Kraemer expresses an insight shared by most participants in the discussion when he says that the only path open to the church today is "candid self-purgation from all its historical and cultural residue" and therefore from its secularized involvement in a structure dictated by a bygone world. This is primarily the path out of the world:

¹¹⁰ Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 117; likewise, Visser 't Hooft, *The Renewal of the Church*, p. 94.

¹¹¹ Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 115.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

If the Church sees this and seizes it in the realism of faith, that is to say, with a robust trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, it will discover the sustaining power of continuity and prestige as being merely crutches, and will be glad to stride forth in faith, in the power of the forces inherent in its nature and calling. Then, I am absolutely convinced, new powers, undreamed of, creative imagination, outside of the possibilities of purely human imagination, new ways of communication transcending what can be seen by a profound cultural and social analysis of the modern world, will be released and discovered.¹¹³

Accordingly, the path of faith is the bold path of risk. The churches risk the possibility of no longer remaining as they now are and as they have established themselves, but rather of keeping themselves consistently open to renewal through God.

The nearer the Church draws to its Lord the nearer it draws to the world. . . . The Church is like an army living in tents. God calls His people to strike their tents and go forward. And Christ's promise holds that He will be with them even to the end of the world.¹¹⁴

The reform of the structure of the churches and congregations

No plan for this reform can be elaborated within the ecumenical discussion. The discussion can only point to the necessity for such reform as seems obligatory from the inquiry into the church. The reform consists in "transforming now stagnant churches into missionary churches."¹¹⁵ Instead of the word, "reform," the word, "revolution,"¹¹⁶ is commonly used. This word indicates both the strong resistance something new will encounter and the sharp demand that is voiced for it. "Nothing less than a revolution in the whole life of the Church is needed, to make it a really missionary Church."¹¹⁷ Even the carefully formulated first Report of the Advisory Commission on the main theme for Evanston says:

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 115 ff.

¹¹⁴ *Missions under the Cross*, p. 191.

¹¹⁵ Hoekendijk, *The Evangelization of Man* . . . , p. 14.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12. Cf. S. C. Neill, "A Revolutionary Church," *Renewal and Advance*.

¹¹⁷ Hoekendijk, *The Evangelization of Man* . . . , p. 12.

Without radical changes of structure and organisation, our existing Churches will never become missionary Churches, which they must be if the Gospel is to be heard in the world.¹¹⁸

The General Secretary of the World Council asks:

Dare we maintain unchanged ecclesiastical institutions which are so largely set up for the purpose of merely keeping the Christian flock together? Should we not adapt our life to the new task of evangelizing the millions outside the churches?¹¹⁹

The question asked in the message of the Evanston Assembly depicts the grounds on which the reform must concretely take place:

Does your congregation live for itself, or for the world around it and beyond it? Does its common life, and does the daily work of its members in the world, affirm the Lordship of Christ or deny it?¹²⁰

These statements and questions also provide an unqualified foundation for J. A. Mackay's position, which was advocated by him in the conference at Whitby (1947), and was so important for the ecumenical discussion (as well as in many other instances):

The whole Church must brace itself to face the frontier. That is to say, it must become a mobile missionary force ready for a wilderness life. It must be ready to march towards the places where the real issues are and where the most crucial decisions must be made. It is a time for us all to be thinking of campaign tents rather than of cathedrals. . . . In a word, the Church must be made to realize that unless it is missionary it is simply not the Church.¹²¹

The aim of the discussion is indicated in this position. The picture is now complete which, to all intents and purposes, had to be left incomplete on the question of the church as

¹¹⁸ "First Report," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), 77.

¹¹⁹ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Renewal of the Church*, p. 113; cf. T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism. The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," *op. cit.*, p. 364. *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism, Davos, July 25-30, 1955, Preparatory Paper*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ *The Evanston Report*, p. 3.

¹²¹ J. A. Mackay, "With Christ to the Frontier," *Renewal and Advance*, p. 203.

church for the sake of systematic openness. Theological verification is possible only when advances are made; otherwise, it is only a didactic matter of useless repetitions. It is necessary to begin at this point if missionary action is to be delineated as suggested in the discussion. But first the question as to that with which evangelism is confronted must be asked.

2. THE NEW CONFRONTATION: THE SITUATION

The question of the situation is not primarily sociological, but rather theological. Were the question primarily put sociologically, then the theological question would inevitably have to be adjusted to the sociological one. The situation would necessarily determine the appearance of the church and, finally, what the church would have to be. This danger is especially associated with specific questions on the structure and action of the church. There would be no comprehension of what the church as the body of Christ is beyond its factual, sociological dependence; nor would the situation be discerned for what it is, viz., in its essential relation to history, which always lies in the hands of God. Ultimately the situation would remain merely statistical and rest in the hands of men driven to despair under it.

The question of the situation concerns the determination of that which confronts the Christian message. This is not primarily a question with reference to the churches, but rather a kerygmatic question. If it were understood with reference to the churches, then attention would, in the final analysis, be directed only to man in his relation to the churches themselves and the definition of the situation would be clouded by the state of the churches. That which confronts the message would be defined according to its proximity to and distance from the churches and would always be somehow regarded within the category of Christian society.

The confronting element can be defined only with reference to the hope in Jesus Christ, and only then with correct

and certain reference to the church. The place, then, at which the question of the situation is raised is momentous. It marks the freedom possessed in analyzing the situation. What is real under the aspect of the message can now be specified, because now it becomes visible. From this viewpoint a new element of confrontation is disclosed.

With this in mind we shall interpret the analysis of the situation undertaken in the ecumenical discussion particularly in connection with the positions taken by J. C. Hoekendijk after H. Kraemer. At the same time we shall tacitly correct a way of treating the problem which, though covert, is perceptible through its sociological pressure. This approach defines the situation in terms of the situation — altogether sociologically. That our approach does not depreciate the sociological analysis requires no substantiation. The function of sociological analysis of the situation is always that of searching for manifestation of what cannot be clearly stipulated theologically and of wakening the question to the Scriptures, what is now to be done under conditions sociologically ascertained.

Vis-à-vis the Report of Section II of Evanston, it has been said "that there was no sociological analysis of the problems which an evangelizing Church actually faces."¹²² Quite aside from the fact that something was expected in this criticism that the Report could not and did not intend to accomplish, this criticism proved correct for the ecumenical discussion in its entirety. In this criticism no comprehensive, systematic study of the situation was initiated or submitted. The situation was never analyzed connectedly and scientifically. The discussion has wanted for a man like H. Kraemer for the question of the church, like J. C. Hoekendijk for the question of the message, and like S. C. Neill for a synopsis of the problems. That is, it has missed a thorough and at the same time ardently theological sociologist. The ecumenical surveys offer

¹²² *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Davos . . . Preparatory Paper*, p. 3.

only regionally defined analyses; most of the statements in the other materials consist of generalities. In almost all his work in this area, J. C. Hoekendijk had recourse to the work of the Parisian Roman Catholic priest, Henri Godin,¹²³ just as S. C. Neill was indebted in the Amsterdam material to the French worker-priest for the most important statements on the situation. H. Godin has therefore attained great importance for the ecumenical discussion. His answer to the question whether France is still a Christian country consists in the call to genuine missions.

THE DISSOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

That the situation outside the congregations and their immediate periphery is extraordinarily complex, regionally and socially, is reflected by the surprises experienced everywhere in the course of the proclamation, especially in metropolitan areas. In fact, if generalization must be employed, "the contemporary secularized man . . . presents a peculiar element of confrontation."¹²⁴ For all his remoteness from the Christian message, the contemporary man on the whole is caught in the consciousness of Christendom (baptism and confirmation) and in a Christian reserve, let us say, in the confrontation with militant communism. In part, he is even capable of using the churches again, and that not only politically. Though part of the masses, he occasionally rises above them and, at times in which it would not be expected, becomes an individual. Occasionally he presents himself as a concrete human being with an impressive dignity of his own making. This cannot be heeded closely enough in giving the proclamation direction.

The situation is therefore by no means homogeneous. In

¹²³ H. Godin and Y. Daniel, *La France, Pays de Mission?* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1950); English condensation in M. Ward, *France Pagan?* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1949).

¹²⁴ H. Lilje, "Wie kann die Botschaft des Evangeliums dem säkularisierten Menschen von heute nahegebracht werden?" *World Lutheranism of Today* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1950), p. 194.

speaking of "a world in every respect in *revolutionary transition*," H. Kraemer quite roughly distinguishes surroundings "partly hostile, partly indifferent, partly open-minded" toward the churches.¹²⁵ But this revolutionary transition stamps the situation in general.

The end of Corpus Christianum

Under the aspect of the proclamation the [European] *Corpus Christianum* is brought to an end. Although formerly vital ties to the gospel's power to forgive and to edify have degenerated for a large segment of contemporary men into ties to an institutionalized church, this does not constitute the termination of the [European] *Corpus Christianum*. Instead its end is manifested, and strikingly so, in the fact that most men in the West no longer come "when you do call for them."¹²⁶ The call of the churches derives no binding power from the unwritten laws of a Christian commonwealth. These laws have been invalidated and surmounted through "progress." The fact of the separation of church and state, the demand for religious tolerance and freedom, and the consignment of the churches into an atmosphere of private clubs have overthrown what seemed created once and for all in the Middle Ages. The end of the *Corpus Christianum* is marked by the fact that the churches have become minorities.

In alarm at the actual state of affairs, J. A. Mackay may well write: "The Second War has completed what the First began; namely, the final dissolution of Christendom in the old sense."¹²⁷ H. Kraemer declares — one is tempted to say, "with a sigh of relief" — that "... the *Corpus Christianum* belongs to the irrevocable past, and, let us add, should remain so."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ H. Kraemer, "A World Task," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 16 (my italics); cf. *Renewal and Advance* . . . , pp. 206 ff.

¹²⁶ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 150.

¹²⁷ J. A. Mackay, "New Frontiers in the Life of the Church," *Theology Today*, XI (1954), 252.

¹²⁸ H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 92.

This is a fact of fundamental import in the ecumenical discussion, to be considered in connection with any analysis of situation or proposal for new action by the churches.

The change in structure into industrial society

The determining sociological components of the termination of the *Corpus Christianum* lie in the shift of the social structure from a hierarchical and feudal class structure to a far-reaching egalitarian and industrial one. Through this shift industrial society becomes, in part, totally autonomous.

The three historical stages in the development of this autonomy are manifest in the Scottish situation — “one of the best church-minded of Western nations” and “a much more church-minded community than in England and Wales.”¹²⁹ In Scotland these historical stages currently abut on one another in three regional belts. The ecumenical survey, *Evangelism in Scotland*, describes these areas with concepts of sociological as well as religious significance.

The first area, rural Scotland, is characterized as “Post-Reformation.” Description: “No real cleavage between Church and community — but conditions of life are changing.” The second area, consisting of a middle-class population and small towns, is called, “Nineteenth Century.” Description: “There is no anti-Church feeling in this section as a whole — merely looking upon the Church as irrelevant to them and their needs.” The third area, the industrial belt, is termed, “Twentieth-Century Secular.” Description: “Rugby football . . . has taken the place of religion. It is the only thing that arouses keenness and community feeling.”¹³⁰

¹²⁹ *Evangelism in Scotland*, p. 6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14, 15. On Scotland cf. *Into All the World: A Statement on Evangelism* (Glasgow, 1946), pp. 22 ff. J. Highet, *The Churches in Scotland To-Day* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1950), pp. 69 ff. On the situation in England: *The Evanston Report*, Section II; cf. *Towards the Conversion of England*, pp. 1 ff. F. W. Dillistone, “Britain and the Second Industrial Revolution,” *Theology Today*, XIII (1956), 11–17. E. R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, pp. 12, et alia. On Germany: H. Symanovski, “The Missionary Responsibility of the Church in Germany,” *Ecumenical Review*, I (1949), 417–23.

In this survey the progressive development of the three stages is clearly detailed. The survey concludes by declaring that something else has taken the place of religion. This is, characteristically, always something that "challenges" men. In industrial society the "challenge" no longer means united action in the Church and specifically in the communion of divine worship, but rather united action in matters of the world and specifically of sports. In any case, though, it is always united action.

Society in the phase of radical secularity

In this phase the following experiences are met with in the course of proclamation. With regard to France and Germany (in the second case) two observations of essentially the same type are vital:

... The French people as a whole has been sickened of Christianity and everything connected with the life of the spirit.¹³¹

In the majority of cases, the parents proved to be largely or wholly alienated from the Church, but did not wish to be considered pagans; for the Church as an institution they had little good to say; of religion as a factor in the life of men they were not unappreciative.¹³²

It might be correct to say, in general, that in the mass society of the industrial world the thinking of men is "to a considerable extent determined by inner convictions not consciously thought out or clearly expressed, taking the form of axioms."¹³³ E. Brunner has assembled the following axioms:

1. Everything is relative.
2. What can't be proved can't be believed.
3. Scientific knowledge is certain and the standard of truth; matters of faith are uncertain.
4. Beyond death nobody knows.
5. "Real" means seen and handled.

¹³¹ H. de Tienda, "Sercinev," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1950), 290.

¹³² *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 145.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

6. The big things are the great things. Because man is so small in this big universe he is so little.
7. I cannot help being what I am.
8. Freedom means doing as I like.
9. Justice means equality.
10. To put religion first is religious arrogance.
11. Laws of nature determine everything.¹³⁴

When properly viewed, these axioms all point to the last one, on which all the others are ultimately dependent. Contemporaneous thinking is accordingly marked by the fact that it "knows nothing of forgiveness."¹³⁵ This utterance is just as inclusive as it is to the point. Through it the very core of the elements confronting the message is characterized. Ultimately this core discloses itself as the *eritis sicut Deus* and as *fixed* self-evidence. This is the new confrontation of the message.

In the discussion an experience has been related which brings to view the profound gravity of the situation in many places:

Christians have done their utmost to render the Gospel barren; it is as if they had plunged it into a sterilising fluid so that every element in it that can startle or baffle or overwhelm people is deadened. . . . We cannot even say that the Gospel comes up against a stone wall, for a wall is hard and resistant, and that is a reaction. The Gospel meets with nothing but supreme indifference: it echoes in the void, it passes back and forth with nothing to stay it. . . . Anything we may say is negated in advance on principle, by prejudice.¹³⁶

From another viewpoint D. T. Niles writes:

It seems to be true today, in a more tragic sense than perhaps it was true in the past, that men are not merely prodigal from their Father's home but have actually forgotten the Father's address. Some seem to have forgotten even that they have a Father.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ P. Maury, "Gegenwart, the Gospel in its Relevance to the Present Time," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 101.

¹³⁶ P. Evdokimov, "The Evangelistic Situation," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1949), 23, 29.

¹³⁷ D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 42.

This explains the fact that the present generation, in contrast to the preceding, is no longer even hostile to the churches and their message. There is only apathetic, unperturbed indifference:

Present indications are that there is little active hostility to the Church among workers. In most cases they are simply indifferent to the institution which bears no relationship to their life. . . . It is generally observed that there is little actual hostility to the Church among intellectuals.¹³⁸

In short, outside of the ecumenical discussion, but of great import for it, the suggestion has been made that the state of affairs is inadequately construed by means of "indifference." Instead, "unresponsiveness"¹³⁹ has been proposed as an accurate description of the situation in which men remain basically unresponsive in the face of the message. This view shows, as the basis of the indifference with which the message is met, that the responsive nature of the individual himself has finally lost every idea of the necessity, even the possibility of an answer. Even where a knowledge of the Gospel, indeed, even an interest in it, can still be detected, the same condition is apparent: "response seems paralysed."¹⁴⁰ "Unresponsiveness" is in fact the most striking characteristic of the situation.

H. D. Wendland summarizes (unintentionally) the statement of the discussion in writing:

Post-Christian society originates in and with the "end of modern times." This society is the world in which the process of secularization is coming to a radical end. We can, accordingly, speak of a society and culture . . . of radical secularity. That is, this society can hardly be currently labeled with the pet formula of "atheism" or the militant "antitheism." It is rather a matter of the way of living and attitude originating when "atheism" changes from a call to battle by a world-view opposed to

¹³⁸ *The Evanston Report* (Entwurf), p. 67.

¹³⁹ R. H. T. Thompson, *The Church's Understanding of Itself*, p. 11. Thompson borrows the idea from H. H. Farmer, "Fundamental Causes of Failure," *Has the Church Failed?*, ed. Sir James Merchant (London: Odhams Pr., 1947), p. 46.

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, *The Church's Understanding of Itself*, p. 12.

the church into an unconscious foregone conclusion in the life and attitude of the masses. Such is our situation. Militant societies of the "godless" exist only within the framework of definite ideological presuppositions as in the restored Marxism of the eastern world. . . . The indifference of nihilism and the rise of nothingness in men out of their own self-made world seem to deaden and to eliminate, so to speak, the church's mission and confession of faith and the church's battle and suffering for its faith, and to engulf it together with the culture and the social order. If the sinister consistency and sureness of purpose are considered with which the modern world evolved into this nothingness, one could probably speak of a terminal situation, a situation at the time of the end in the sense of the New Testament prophecy of judgment.¹⁴¹

In this situation the believing church is the *minority*.¹⁴²

CONTEMPORARY MAN IN HIS COMMUNITIES

The product of the dissolution of the Christian community is universally the "uprooted, regimented, instrumentalized, alienated man" of this time.¹⁴³ The decorporation process of the nineteenth and twentieth century has brought into being the "fourth man,"¹⁴⁴ to use an idea J. C. Hoekendijk borrowed from A. Weber. According to J. C. Hoekendijk the "fourth man" is the radical, post-bourgeois man of industrial society. He has been dis severed from the community existing in the churches and falling under the churches' sphere of influence and is counter to the "third man" of the *Corpus*

141 H. D. Wendland, "Die Situation am Ende der Neuzeit," *Dokumente*, XIII (1957), pp. 214 ff.; cf., D. Bonhoeffer, "God in an Irreligious World," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1952), 131-38. T. E. Jessop, "Modern Man's Basic Need," *International Review of Missions*, XLI (1952), 77-82.

142 H. H. Walz, "Christendom in a Secularized World," *Ecumenical Review*, X (1957), p. 285.

143 "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

144 J. C. Hoekendijk, "Die Theologie des 'vierden' Menschen," *Die neue Furche*, VII (1953), 391-97; Hoekendijk, "Rondom het Apostolaat," *Wending*, VII (1952), 547-54; cf. A. Weber, *Kulturgeschichte als Kultursoziologie* (Munich: R. Piper, 1950), pp. 32, 416 ff., 443 ff.; Hoekendijk, *Der dritte oder der vierte Mensch. Vom Sinn des geschichtlichen Daseins* (Munich: R. Piper, 1953), pp. 16, 43 ff. In contrast to Western man, who is integrated in freedom and humanity, Weber is referring to man in the communist social structure and regards him as the "specter" of totalitarianism and functionalism.

Christianum. The "fourth man" finds expression in modern, post-personal civilization, in which he is dynamically depersonalized. Having his roots basically in the masses or succumbing to their pressure, he lives in determinate communities, takes their laws upon himself, and capitulates to their suzerainty.¹⁴⁵ In this situation *effective* confrontation is no longer exercised by the individual, but rather by the individual in community—or, to put it more sharply, by the *community* in general!

Autonomous communities confronting the church community

H. D. Wendland has adjudged the "religion of work"¹⁴⁶ to be an essential factor in the development of such autonomous communities. If not regarded merely as an elimination of religious gaps effected within the myth that the world is moving towards technical perfection, this development is seen to have been primarily an expression of stability and common will in a particular situation. The workers had been pushed to the edge of the community during the early and mid-capitalistic periods and had been abandoned by the churches, which remained in the center of society. Subsequently, the workers became aware of their singularity and power as a group. This awareness has had consequences to the present day beyond its ideological expression. Work has come to possess autonomy and an important ethical position. A report from Scotland on a distinctive case taken from the years of the depression states:

It was unemployment (80% of the male population in some areas) that really showed the skilled and unskilled workers that they belong together and finally convinced many that the Church belonged to the other side. It was not so much that the Church did nothing. It was rather that the Church did not care. When the unemployed sent a

¹⁴⁵ Cf. D. Riesman *et al.*, *The Lonely Crowd* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1953).

¹⁴⁶ H. D. Wendland, *Die Kirche in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1956), p. 177.

deputation to the General Assembly, they were not received. Probably the Assembly could have done nothing, but its effect on the men was disastrous. The Church was not concerned with them; that was the impression they received.¹⁴⁷

In a thorough historical analysis of the development in Sheffield during the last hundred and fifty years of an autonomous community of workers in the face of the community constituted by the church middle class, E. R. Wickham has classically illustrated how this sort of development has been typical for over a century and just what it means within its peculiar sociological formation. The most impressive theological result of his investigation is the confirmation, which plays a weighty role in missionary science, that *sociological grounds for disbelief as well as for belief* are implicit in the autonomous communities. According to E. R. Wickham, to be unwilling to recognize this and therefore to overlook the sociological dimension of the answer would be tantamount to assuming

. . . a remarkable predilection on God's part for the middle classes, and a singular distaste for, let us say, industrial workers! This is not to impugn the fidelity of those who have responded to Christian faith in a milieu that is conducive to such response, nor to deny that faith is a gift of God. But neither must infidelity be hastily impugned where adverse conditioning is effective, and where invincible ignorance is a general consequence.¹⁴⁸

Stamped by the historical position of the working community and communities, the sociological grounds for both belief and disbelief lie primarily in the disparate, arrogant, and—later—extraordinarily self-conscious isolation of the middle class and of the churches merged with the middle class. The sociological grounds also lie in a lack of Christian education, a duty neglected by the churches, and in resistance to that education due to class morality and protection from debilitation of the

¹⁴⁷ *The Evanston Report*, pp. 24–25.

¹⁴⁸ Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, p. 220.

community. The sociological reasons for belief and disbelief are therefore prompted by a desire for protective devices; but they can also be traced to the sequestration of the individual within a community which has set itself against the Church.¹⁴⁹

With this primordial community, so to speak, as a starting point, or at least through its powerful impulse, the various communities referred to above have been developed and activated by the secularistic ideas derived from philosophy and the natural sciences and propagated by an inferior pedagogy. The origin of these communities is always characterized by the fact that they do not issue from a community marked by Christianity and that their focal point always rests on joint work or something similar (sports, jazz, some circle of technical orientation). These communities have never experienced living contact with the gospel for they are a product of estrangement from the churches. In their view, these churches are nothing more or less than another organization, and, at that, an outmoded one. The powers which develop these communities never tend toward the churches, nor do they suffer any such tendency on the part of individuals. Occasionally, it might be said, these communities have themselves become "churches"! Their hope lies in themselves.

Men in an a-Christian milieu

Under specific conditions the most elementary of these communities have formed their own milieus, from which Christian influences have been totally eliminated in the consistent development of the community. This completes the dissassociation from the churches.

S. C. Neill and J. C. Hoekendijk, both on their own and as spokesmen for their sources of information, have called attention to the a-Christian milieu as it has sprung up especially in France—therefore the situation in France is re-

¹⁴⁹ Cf. E. Fenn, "The Acid Test: The Industrial Worker," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1949), 16-22.

peatedly used as a model—as a feature of the structural change which the society has undergone and as it is found in most of the urban centers of the West European countries, though less clearly circumscribed than in, e.g., Paris. It is the “circle, and a very wide one, of those who are completely alienated from Christian ideas and traditions,”¹⁵⁰ partly “the community in poverty of an urban proletariat,”¹⁵¹ but partly also an “elite” with an intellectual or a “Bohemian” milieu. These “constitute a mission field in the strict sense of the term.”¹⁵²

The ecumenical survey on the situation in France is constructed from a number of experiential reports. These reports seem to aim in the end at analyzing, on the bases of concrete encounters, the fact of the evolving and already existing a-Christian milieu. The ecumenical survey describes this milieu as “a firm block which lives practically without any contact with a Christian church”:

The proletarian world is a different civilization, not a part of our own society [“class”] but a society apart, not to be measured by our standards, dreams and rhythm. All attempts to bring this world within the boundaries of our society are futile. . . .

[The men of this milieu] shaped their destiny not only outside, but in opposition to, the Church and everything it was supposed to stand for. Every single act of self-assertion necessarily implied a reaction against the existing order of things. The self-conscious proletariat could always be found in the neighborhood of, if not linked up with, all kinds of anti-status-quo movements. . . . They would do battle against all institutions, which overtly or tacitly accepted, supported or sanctioned society as it stood, and the Church was singled out as the institution which had raised its hands in blessing over the status quo.¹⁵³

In this situation a *myth of its own* was created among the “proletarian” milieu, which to a large extent was derived from Marxism. “The worker’s myth defines his place as an

¹⁵⁰ *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design*, II, 150.

¹⁵¹ *Evanston Report*, p. 7.

¹⁵² *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design*, II, 150; cf. pp. 184, 186. Among others, see also T. O. Wedel, *Evangelism in Evanston*, p. 43.

¹⁵³ *Evangelism in France*, p. 38.

outcast of society" and "provides him with a past and future all his own."¹⁵⁴ On this basis the active concern of the churches for him is also evaluated:

In composing their legend, the proletariat have dwelt upon those instances which most emphasise this role of the Church. They have not, for example, neglected to pass on from generation to generation the fact that in the middle of the last century priests insisted on a "Sunday rest" for the workers: As a matter of social concern? By no means; they explained their real objective clearly: "Sunday rest will enable us to instruct the proletariat, and thus help to safeguard the present order."¹⁵⁵

The evangelistic endeavors in behalf of these men of necessity ran aground because they consisted in the call to return to the milieu of the churches:

The Churches regarded the proletariat as a "lost group" of recent backsliders, still somewhere on the fringe of the Church and definitely not outside "Christendom." All that seemed to be required to call the proletariat back was to remind them of what they must most certainly have known. It was the heyday of anecdotal stories about "a God-fearing mother, who had once . . ." — remember? — the time when evangelical hymns revolved around the theme of "O lost sheep, come back . . ." Come back . . . remember? But the proletariat did not, had nothing to, remember. As a group they had never left the Church, for the simple reason that they had never been in it.¹⁵⁶

This is one of the decisive utterances of the ecumenical discussion. In treating the question of the situation and action in evangelism, this utterance is of extraordinary importance for defining that which confronts evangelism. The men in the a-Christian milieu have never *belonged to the church*:

It is now an almost universally accepted result of recent research that the industrial proletariat in France did not leave the Church; they constituted themselves as a distinct group and took shape outside the Christian Church. Since their rise (1830-1880) these masses have never been within the fold of the Church.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Similarly we read in the draft of the preparatory volume for Evanston:

It is not true to say that workers are alienated from the Church. They have, in fact, not been part of the Church in Europe and Britain since the time when a distinct worker's movement became a reality. . . . It is . . . interesting to note . . . that when experiments in Evangelism are conducted among the workers the hostility is expressed not against the Church as an expression of Christian faith but against the Church in its organized form. The assumption on the part of the workers is that this organized Church is an ally of the Capitalist class.¹⁵⁸

It is not the Church as the body of Christ to which these men never belonged, but rather the Church as the bourgeois church, i.e., as an actual community in which one no longer participated because it had in the last analysis broken with the community. This lack of participation is factual; and due to it the gospel was no longer heard. The direct consequence is that the sacraments—also baptism more and more—are ignored. In an a-Christian milieu the baptized live according to the prescriptions of the unbaptized!

WHY "NEW CONFRONTATION"

While the analysis of the situation undertaken in the ecumenical discussion on evangelism has been concentrated on the a-Christian milieu, the attempt has been made to uncover an important part of the situation ordinarily remaining concealed from the churches. But what is more, it was also the intention to demonstrate by this fact how the situation was progressively tending toward the a-Christian milieu. This is well illustrated in an example supplied by D. T. Niles:

When I was in the United States of America some years ago, I was invited to a theological school to address the students. Instead of addressing them I said to them, "You are learning to preach the Gospel. I want you to preach the Gospel to me. Think of me as an American pagan. I have never been to church. I have never read the Bible. The

¹⁵⁸ *The Evanston Report* (Entwurf), p. 67.

home from which I come is also pagan. I have an elementary education. I am a worker on the road." The first thing those students said to me was, "You are a sinner." To which I replied, "I don't know what you are talking about. I have never heard the word 'sinner' before." . . . For fifteen minutes those students preached the Gospel to me, while I kept on saying, "I don't understand. Please use those words that I know." They finally ended by saying, "Such pagans don't exist."¹⁵⁹

The specific reference to the a-Christian milieu is not to be taken to mean that this reference — as has become clear — covers the entire situation. The reference implies only that the situation ultimately tends toward this milieu, that in this tendency the situation is overshadowed by the milieu already, and that the situation can be fully grasped and judged in its characteristic of distance from the churches. The reference to the a-Christian milieu shows that missions have come to be confronted in a generally new way.

This confrontation is new by virtue of its difference from that which has traditionally confronted evangelism up to now. If this evangelism of the past dealt with individuals (which it at least purposed to do) who in spite of all the preaching about salvation were regarded actually as anomalous despisers of the socio-Christian morality or as freethinkers in a world marked by the churches — if this was the case

¹⁵⁹ D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 89. This must be said even now of the situation in the United States, which per se is being evaluated more and more optimistically. In the survey, *United States*, church membership, which has grown dynamically in recent years, is depicted in detail; but it is also critically evaluated. G. Sweazey, *Evangelism in the United States* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1958), pp. 8 ff., writes: "Both statistical and cultural indications make it plain that there is at present in this country a greatly increased desire to have a religious faith and membership in a church." "Religion is recognized as important for national survival." "Thus the turn to religion might be dismissed as a strategy . . . in the cold war. Its source would be, not personal repentance, but an instinctive mass groping for security and the defense of 'the American way of life.'" Those who had never been convinced by the arguments of the preachers have now been convinced by the demonstration of what happened when men tried to be completely secular." ". . . it is just a step farther to an American Shinto which is a blatant reversal of Christian humility, and to a religious emotionalism which is merely a by-product of mass psychology in a cold war." "Some are wondering whether the turn to religion may not really be the ominous rise of a modern paganism—the cult of the comfortable."

with the evangelism of the past, then today the churches' confrontation consists of autonomous communities living alongside the churches, in which individuals have created a world of their own. If a satisfactory result from Christian education could formerly be assumed, today this can no longer be done. If the soul of man could once be addressed with regard to its judgment and salvation, today the whole man counts, to whom the word, "soul," is incomprehensible. Once there was no a-Christian milieu — in any case, not an established one — and a broad development up to it; today it exists. If "revival" was possible formerly, today we must tacitly concede that any such attempts miscarry. The new element of confrontation is the man who *can no longer be called back*.

This means that revival preaching in evangelism does not take seriously that very element of confrontation which realistically and effectively meets the churches beyond the perceptible circle of their influence. Reflection on what course the churches are commanded to take in Communist society would most clearly lead to the recognition "that we have to re-think our evangelistic work as pure missionary work, and act accordingly."¹⁶⁰ Evangelism will have to be *appropriate to the milieu*. Under no circumstances can its call be a call to return: "not 'come to us,' but rather 'Christ is willing to be with you where you are.'"¹⁶¹ The road to the new element of confrontation must therefore be a *missionary* one. And from this new confrontation evangelism receives its *sociological dimension*. Evangelism enters "fields" which are sociologically isolated from the churches and which lack the Christian message at their center. If evangelism enters these "fields" and devotes itself to the task of the a-Christian milieu as the "acid test" of its proclamation, which is demanded at this very place, then evangelism will see the fruit of the Christian message grow also in places in which up to now its growth seems to

¹⁶⁰ *Evangelism in France*, p. 54.

¹⁶¹ J. C. Hoekendijk, "Orde, Milieu, Mens," *Wending*, V (1950), 292.

have been stifled, i.e., in the flexible, autonomous area surrounding the churches. The power of witness grows "outside"! The church can exist only when witnesses stand among all men. They are distant (as pagans); this we knew. They are near; this we now know. "The World has come to the Church's doorstep."¹⁶²

3. THE NEW COURSE: MISSIONARY ACTION

When viewed under the aspect of an active and dynamic missionary church, the question as to the true being of the church developed a highly practical accent on the basis of a biblically reformed view of renewal. From this accent consideration moved, with occasionally forced partiality, in the direction of the *practical venture* of the churches aimed at surmounting a situation jeopardizing the church as church. The question arose and pressed for an answer as to how this venture must and can appear in practice, because only on this basis can a genuine evaluation of the discussion result.

In like manner, the point has been reached at which the question of the new confrontation must be conclusively evaluated. The theological aspect of this question, which is interwoven with the sociological aspect, is so closely tied to the question of the church as church that it can become valid in its full import only when, as just indicated, the question of the church is set in the context of the church's missionary action. On the other hand, the question of missionary action is dependent on the answer to the question of the factual situation of the confrontation. The close ties are to be viewed anew which connect the questions of the church, the confrontation, and the missionary action of the church.

What is missionary action? For this section the fundamental answer to the question must lie in the trend of thought envisaged in the ecumenical discussion on evangel-

¹⁶² J. C. Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 167.

ism. Such a line of thought might have served as a viewpoint for dealing with specific problems, which the discussion, strictly speaking, can never do more than name. Beyond and above any specific undertakings, missionary action is *living in hope*, and doing so while passing into a "foreign land" (Heb. 13:13). From the viewpoint of the discussion on the message and basis of evangelism, this view of missionary action is intended to be understood in a specific way. As the bearer of missionary action the church lives in hope in Jesus Christ as the evangelist (missionary), a complete hope and yet a hope that must be grasped ever anew. In His service the church has been deemed worthy to participate. This means that the church lives in hope in its Lord, through whose disgrace and triumph the end of the world is surmounted so that the world may be filled with His reign. It means that hope for the world shines forth in this hope: "... can the face of Christ still shine in the faces of His people? Here is the whole of the problem."¹⁶³

This view of missionary action has to be strongly emphasized before the contemporaneous problems of proclamation are developed.

If living in hope is the focal point in considering missionary action, the question, "How do we approach contemporary men?", is secondary. In the ecumenical discussion the primary question is that of the true essence of the church. Before this primary question the problem of method becomes a relative matter, insofar as it can be said that a church which dedicates itself wholeheartedly and with utter disregard of its own security and its own pride to the suffering and now comforted Lord, who strives to the end of the world and of time, can hope to make inroads into a hostile and indifferent world: "It is He who converts."¹⁶⁴

The question of the missionary action of the church is therefore only part of the question of the church and its re-

¹⁶³ P. Evdokimov, "The Evangelistic Situation," *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 63.

newal. This second question is that of the church as the *community* of all who hope in Jesus Christ, from which the action of hope in hope emerges of itself, as it were. The problem of the community, within which the problem of witness by the entire congregation is to be viewed, is the dominant factor in the question of missionary action!

If we confine ourselves to the question of the community, not only will the central point of the ecumenical discussion be clearly delineated, but furthermore nothing essential will be omitted. Within the community (congregation) the life of the new age takes place symbolically in the hiddenness of the Christ-event. All the problems of missionary action converge at this point and are given depth. At this point lies the criterion of the theological validity and the practical fitness of the proclamation, however it may be expressed. Be it a matter of two foci of the discussion, i.e., of evangelism in the modern working world of the laborers and the intelligentsia, be it a matter of evangelistic campaigns and of the work of church rallies, a matter of the work of the academies or of journalistic activity, or be it a matter of any other attempts to find "new paths" (which are reported from all sides), the question of the community and of the validity of any attempts beyond its achievements in the final analysis resolves itself into the question of making "those who have been won" feel at home. In addition, when the community is stressed, an *unmasking of activities* is implicitly undertaken in the discussion. To take refuge behind such activities unfortunately characterizes extraordinary efforts on the part of most churches. This is the very core of the matter.

This simultaneously involves a problem which has long been thought to be the principal one in reaching those "distant from the Church." This is the problem of language. But communication is in reality a much more comprehensive matter than mere verbal dialogue. It embraces the entire life of man. Only what is lived is communicable. The only man

capable of communication is one who, in living out his life, lives in the community. The questions of interpretation are questions of the community which either is or is not entered. If the community is entered, the problems of communication become relative. Indeed, it must be said that such problems have been taken in hand, i.e., the hand which holds the other and is held by the other, and resolved!¹⁶⁵ The problem of missionary action is the community: "Its very existence is itself a witness to the world."¹⁶⁶

THE SCHEMA OF MESSAGE, COMMUNITY AND SERVICE

The mandates of the situation as experienced and those of the Holy Scripture are closely related, though also in tension. Just as this relationship is noticeable in defining the new confrontation and the church as church, it is also noticeable in defining the course of evangelism and of missionary action.

The traditional course of revival preaching in evangelism

The recognition that the premise of the revival sermon (evangelization, revivalism) no longer exists since the disappearance of the Christian formation of public and private life implicit in the *Corpus Christianum*, repudiates the traditional course of evangelization. We refrain from attempting to bring men who are estranged from believing back to the church by means of special exertions which the congregations exercise outside of their service of worship:

There must be something to revive! To ask prospective converts to "decide for Christ" in a vacuum of ignorance, with only a vague memory of a man called Jesus, is running great dangers.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ K. v. Bismarck, "The Christian Vocabulary: An Obstacle to Communication?" *Ecumenical Review*, X (1957), p. 14: "When communication takes place with a brother in the life they share, then the 'Christian' language comes into being of itself. . . ."

¹⁶⁶ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁶⁷ T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism. The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," *op. cit.*, p. 368.

In proof of the failure of this course, the discussion is faced with the fact "that usually ninety per cent of those present are already at least occasional attenders at some Christian place of worship, and that the majority are in fairly close touch with some Church and its organizations."¹⁶⁸ In other words, the traditional course of revivalism does not speak to evangelism's present confrontation.

The rejection of the revivalistic course is conjoined in the discussion with a serious warning against presenting the proclamation one-sidedly through "verbalism."¹⁶⁹ According to T. O. Wedel the course of revivalism is a "narrowing down of the concept of evangelism to preaching" or merely to "speech-evangelism."¹⁷⁰ Revivalism therefore constitutes a dangerous curtailment of the proclamation. What confronts evangelism now is estranged in its entire existence from the Christian message and the church. Whoever does not take this new element of confrontation seriously in its sweeping estrangement and autonomy and fails to be aware of the following falls victim to revivalism:

The Gospel is something more than a bare presentation of the person of Jesus. The good news of salvation is a drama, an action—one in which the convert must participate. It must be preached in action as well as in words.¹⁷¹

In this connection H. Kraemer writes:

The extravagant and nearly exclusive stress on verbal communication, on preaching and sermonizing, in the world of the Churches, which issued from the Reformation, is a degeneration or distortion of the Reformers' rediscovery of the prophetic character and quality of the Word of God. This stress has closed the eyes of the Church to the manifold

¹⁶⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, p. 137. Illuminating on this point is: R. Niebuhr, "Proposal to Billy Graham," *Christian Century*, LXXIII (1956), 921-22.

¹⁶⁹ *The Evanston Report*, p. 58.

¹⁷⁰ Wedel, "Evangelism. The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," *op. cit.*, pp. 362-63.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

means of communication which we find in the Bible, which in contradiction to our Western world is not confined to, or imprisoned in, a "verbal culture."¹⁷²

This is not to say that the problem of language is relativized. It is the object of great struggle equally in the questions of preaching and of evangelism, and amid these considerations obviously entails a much broader view of the question on the course of evangelism. But the problem of language is regarded as "too narrow and one-sided" an approach and as "only one aspect and probably not the most important"¹⁷³ in the question of communication. Accordingly, the validity of the question, "How do we approach contemporary man?", as a question of language alone is vigorously challenged and even denied.

Behind the challenge and denial lies the insight that the man confronting the message is more than purely an object for talk, all the more since the situation of an "apparent devaluation of words" has arisen in which "words can no longer function as symbols, which transmit meaning."¹⁷⁴ Consequently, in the discussion another course has been pointed out to the question of the possibilities of proclamation known to Holy Scripture.

Missionary action (kerygma, koinonia, diakonia)

Since the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Jerusalem (1928), discussion on the question of the so-called *comprehensive approach* has paved the way for the schema of message, community, and service. Behind the "comprehensive approach" as the course for evangelism, es-

¹⁷² H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 27. Recognition of this is spreading further and further. Cf. H. C. Noble, "Evangelism on the College Campus," *Theology Today*, XI (1954), 63: "... verbal witness is but one type of witnessing," "... witnessing to the resurrection is not necessarily talking about the resurrection."

¹⁷³ Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 27; cf. Bismarck, "The Christian Vocabulary: An Obstacle to Communication," *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ *The Evanston Report*, p. 57.

pecially in Asia and Africa, lies the conviction that man is reached by the message only if he is addressed in both his wholeness and his social setting (comprehensively). Evangelism is not to be directed only to his understanding, his feelings, or his conscience. Evangelism must rather be mindful of the whole man in the whole context of his life. At the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Whitby (1947) the schema appeared in the form of its first two conceptions, *kerygma* and *koinonia*; ¹⁷⁵ and the question of *koinonia* pervaded the conference.¹⁷⁶ At Willingen the schema was brought to completion: "This witness is given by proclamation, fellowship and service."¹⁷⁷

It was J. C. Hoekendijk who introduced the schema into the ecumenical discussion on evangelism and maintained it there.¹⁷⁸ The connection with the idea of the "comprehensive approach" is clear. J. C. Hoekendijk's dissertation leads to a rather lengthy development and application of the idea; and the constructive element in his work is characterized by this idea.¹⁷⁹ He himself named the schema "comprehensive evangelism."¹⁸⁰ It was then adopted especially by M. A. C. Warren¹⁸¹ and T. O. Wedel ¹⁸² and the latter brought it to bear in the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁵ J. Baillie, "The Given Word, The Message of the Unvarying Gospel," *Renewal and Advance*.

¹⁷⁶ L. Levonian, "The Dynamic Word. The Holy Spirit in Fellowship," *Renewal and Advance*.

¹⁷⁷ *Missions under the Cross*, p. 220. It also appears at Lund in one place: *Lund*, 1952, p. 250.

¹⁷⁸ Hoekendijk, "Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, pp. 171 ff. Previously: Hoekendijk, "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁷⁹ Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingwetenschap*, pp. 277 ff.

¹⁸⁰ Hoekendijk, "Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁸¹ M. A. C. Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 403. Likewise, A. McLeish, *Christ's Hope of the Kingdom* (London: World Dominion Pr., 1952), pp. 116 ff.

¹⁸² T. O. Wedel, "Evangelism's Threefold Witness: Kerygma, Koinonia, Diakonia," *Ecumenical Review*, IX (1957), *passim*.

¹⁸³ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism, Davos, July 25-30, 1955*, App. 2. "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, pp. 21 ff.

In connection with the kingdom of God (*shalom*), J. C. Hoekendijk offers the following definition:

(a) This *shalom* is *proclaimed*. That is one aspect of evangelism. In the *kerygma* that *shalom* is represented in the literal sense, it is made present.

(b) This *shalom* is *lived*. That is another aspect of evangelism. It is lived in *koinonia*. We must not speak too quickly of community. Only in so far as men are partakers of the *shalom*, represented in the *kerygma*, do they live in mutual communion and fellowship.

(c) There is a third aspect of evangelism. This *shalom* is *demonstrated* in humble service, *diakonia*. To partake of the *shalom* in *koinonia* means practically and realistically to act as a humble servant.¹⁸⁴

This makes it clear that the three biblical conceptions of *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*, reflect the three ways of the gospel's mode of operation. These three share the closest mutual relationship in the sense of their mutual interpenetration. In saying this much, though, more precise definition in a sense pertinent to the ecumenical discussion immediately becomes necessary. The three modes of operation are those of the "Evangelist," Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior, the Prophet, the Lord of the community of disciples and the Suffering Servant of God. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, who, in adopting the schema, replaces the conception of *kerygma* in the sense of its execution with that of *marturia*, says:

It is true of mission, *marturia*; it is true of *diakonia*; it is true of *koinonia*, that in all these Christ himself is active. He is the Apostolos, the Diakonos, he is the Shepherd and the Creator of the communion, and the one who builds his own Body. Therefore we do not only work for him; we work with him.¹⁸⁵

Kerygma, *marturia*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* therefore belong to the "*esse* of the Church." They constitute the church as church in the world.

¹⁸⁴ Hoekendijk, "Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹⁸⁵ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Mission of the Church," *Student World*, I (1957), pp. 322-23.

At this point the eschatological reference appears. Each of the above-named participants in the discussion conceives of *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* as signs of the new age which has dawned and is moving toward its completion: "evangelism in the light of this great hope."¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, evangelism of the Lord of the new age cannot consist, under this Lord and even in the new age itself, in communicating the gospel as a mere and purely verbal repetition of the message. On the contrary, because the gospel is for the whole man in the whole world, evangelism demands that the whole life of the church be a living in hope which, founded on the Word, expresses itself through serving the world in the congregation of Christians. The new age is not only speech; it is (in all its hiddenness) a way of *living*: "Jesus viewed life as a whole and treated it as a whole."¹⁸⁷ "The Messianic era is revealed in terms of physical liberation."¹⁸⁸ The "witness . . . in word and deed is a sign of the coming end. . . ."¹⁸⁹ Through this conception the distinction between expectant evangelism and traditional evangelism becomes clear. What confronts the message is taken seriously in all its ramifications and not simply in its "consequences for the soul"; the congregation is taken seriously in that it is expected to be what it is; and time is taken seriously, in which proclamation is to be missionary proclamation, i.e., expectant evangelism.

THE COMMUNITY

The question of the community — "the world hungry for community"¹⁹⁰ — is the central question of confrontation

¹⁸⁶ Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *op. cit.*, p. 403.

¹⁸⁷ Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 43; cf. N. Goodall, "Evangelism Today," *Student World*, I (1957), pp. 341 ff.

¹⁸⁸ R. Chandran, "The Calling of the Church to Witness and to Serve," in *Minutes and Reports of the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 30-August 7, 1957*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁹ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁰ D. T. Niles, "The Church's Call to Mission and Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, V (1953), 246; similarly, Niles, "Our Search for Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1950), 357.

and the question regarding the church's becoming church. T. Allan, a member of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism, argues:

- i) that the solution to the vast problem of communicating the Gospel to the masses who live outside the sphere of Christian fellowship is inextricably bound up with the *local church*—that the key to evangelism lies in the parish.
- ii) . . . that the Church can only fulfill its function, and penetrate the secular world when it is exhibiting the life of a genuine and dynamic Christian *community*—the *koinonia* of the New Testament.
- iii) . . . that in all this the place of the *layman* is decisive.¹⁹¹

The congregation as community

The leading idea in the problem of the congregation as community is caught in the following sentence:

If the existence of the Church and the manner of its life do not themselves constitute good tidings for the human community within which the Church has its being, then the Church can not witness to the good tidings of God's coming in Jesus Christ.¹⁹²

This sentence becomes relevant to the discussion in the elaboration of the given situation.

D. T. Niles writes that the weakness of the churches' evangelism lies in the fact that they lose touch with the Word of Christ in their parishes, though these are gathered through the Word of Christ, insofar as the life of the congregations does not grow "by participation in the life of Christ."¹⁹³ This participation is to be understood in the sense of the "sacramental act" in which the individual is allied with his Lord; and the members of Christ's body, as a result, are spiritually united with one another in forming a community. D. T. Niles did not even have in mind the almost insuperably impersonal tone of the average European congregation, implicit in the

¹⁹¹ T. Allan, *The Face of My Parish*, p. 66 (my italics).

¹⁹² "Evangelism," *Bulletin of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches*, I (1955), 20-23.

¹⁹³ Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 61.

incidence of church attendance and the congregational structure of the state church in its later stages of development. Yet his comment points to an acute absence of community (absence of the body of Christ), which contradicts the power of the gospel among congregations everywhere. The absence of community cannot be hidden from those who vigilantly confront the Christian message and the churches, which in many cases plainly creates a prejudice leading to the rejection of the message itself.

This fact is all the weightier in the Western countries since a remnant of the Christian heritage remains within them, as was seen in the description of the new confrontation; but it has been wrought in such a fashion that it no longer possesses any quickening power. The name of Jesus is known and it is used; but on the whole it has become history on which the doors of the present have closed. The Word of Jesus Christ is heard historically and is therefore not even heard. In connection with this line of thought, T. O. Wedel cites G. McLeod, the founder of the Iona Community in Scotland,¹⁹⁴ who emphasizes by reason of this fact the significance of the congregation as community. To pray for this community, he says, is the concern of the congregation as congregation, to hope for it and to create it is its foremost duty, in view of its new confrontation:

If the Christian message is to have meaning in the conditions of today, it is necessary to offer men a more recognizable total community life. . . . This means that the traditional order presenting the Gospel needs to be reversed. The prevailing practice is to start from God the Creator, tell men of the redemptive work of Christ, and lead them by this path into the experience of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. But since the content of our message has ceased to have any meaning for them, the only thing to be done is to *begin at the other end by showing them*

¹⁹⁴ In the ecumenical discussion the Iona Community has become a model in connection with the problem of community. The best presentations on the Iona Community are found in J. Highet, *The Churches in Scotland Today*, pp. 129 ff., and in T. R. Morton, *The Iona Community Story* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1957). (Morton is the author of *Evangelism in Scotland*.) Cf. G. McLeod, *We Shall Rebuild* (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1939), *passim*. McLeod, *A Message of Friendship* (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1951).

community in actual operation. Something new must enter into their experience before they can understand the Christian message.¹⁹⁵

T. O. Wedel writes: "Community-evangelization, then, may turn out to be the rediscovered clue to our vocation today."¹⁹⁶ The Report of Section II at Evanston conclusively states on this question:

The Church which God uses to communicate the gospel is a fellowship, a *koinonia*, drawn and held together by the love of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the need and desire of its members to share this experience with each other and to draw those outside into that *koinonia*.¹⁹⁷

By "formation of community" the ecumenical discussion did not have the organization of a private society in mind, as might have been feared because of some of the participants. The danger of this misunderstanding is dispelled through the consistent eschatological bearing of the question, which now sets the direction for further considerations. To use the terminology of the discussion: *koinonia* is *koinonia* through *kerygma*; it is expressed in *diakonia*.

All this is particularly clear in J. C. Hoekendijk's work. The formation of a community from the congregation — for Hoekendijk everything depends on the congregation as a serving congregation — occurs through concrete obedience in the face of the proclaimed Word in the world, or, more

¹⁹⁵ McLeod in Wedel, "Evangelism: An Essay in Criticism," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1951), 371 (my italics); cf. R. T. Morton, *The Household of Faith* (Glasgow: Iona Community, 1951), *passim*.

¹⁹⁶ Wedel, "Evangelism: An Essay in Criticism," *op. cit.*, p. 370. As an interesting comparison, Wedel adduces the American organization, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and writes on this group: "Without incorporation into the group and a drawing upon its power, nothing can happen. The fellowship is the dynamic agent of salvation" (*ibid.*). Wedel likewise refers to an experiment in Jersey City of which it is reported: "Effective evangelism is the process of living in a Christian community . . . It is the Christian community which makes the evangelistic impact upon the individuals and upon the communities surrounding it" (*ibid.*, p. 368). The experiment of Iona and in a certain sense that of Agape in the west Italian Alps consists in this.

¹⁹⁷ *The Evanston Report*, p. 102.

precisely, in the specific environment in which Christians find themselves. This environment is determined by the breakdown of the *Corpus Christianum*, which powerfully contracts the boundaries of the congregation and brings it to view as the gathering of those who preserve the hope amid this breakdown. *Koinonia* thus becomes community; congregation becomes community in contrast to the world: "The koinonia is the place where the shalom is already lived. As such, the Christian community belongs to the new age."¹⁹⁸

Similarly, congregation becomes community in devoting itself to the world, in which it actualizes itself through proclamation and service as the congregation of the risen and returning Lord. Even and precisely under the contemporary situation the congregation as a "kerygmatic and diakonic unit"¹⁹⁹ becomes aware that it belongs to the messianic time and its Lord. It functions in *diakonia* as "translation into the language of the hands"²⁰⁰ and in the faithful attempt to demonstrate the life of the new age through "humble service":²⁰¹

As partakers of shalom men live [in the world!] in mutual communion and fellowship.²⁰²

This fellowship of the partakers of the same salvation is nothing more in this world than a company of strangers and pilgrims . . . , a *paroikia*.²⁰³

In other words, congregation becomes community in evangelism. In itself the congregation becomes what evangelism uses.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

²⁰⁰ Hoekendijk, "The Theology of Evangelism," *Minutes of the Working Committee of the Department on Evangelism held at Herrenalb, Germany*, App. I, p. 6.

²⁰¹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 174.

²⁰² Hoekendijk, "The Theology of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁰³ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, pp. 173-74.

²⁰⁴ This matter is described from experience, in a manner scarcely to be outdone, by T. Allan, *The Face of My Parish*, pp. 47 ff.; cf. *A Monthly Letter About Evangelism*, V (1957). J. de Blank, *The Parish in Action* (London: Mowbray, 1956), pp. 15 ff.

The congregation in communities

When occurring under the double aspect of 1) the emergence of the congregation and 2) the evangelism of the congregation,²⁰⁵ the formation of a community from the congregation in the situation of industrial mass society will lead of necessity to forms through which "our traditional parochial structure of church life may give place, where needed for giving foothold for the Gospel, to a structure"²⁰⁶ composed of the smallest and most varied cells of Christian community life. This is the point at which the question as to the practical venture of the churches concerning their structure is approached. It is a venture in *actualizing* the message through the community bearing the message.

J. C. Hoekendijk has explained that "the Christian community [is] an open community."²⁰⁷ This means two things: The Christian community is "open to everyone who has become a partaker of the same shalom" and consequently is possessed of neither a national nor a social exclusiveness (this requires actualization); and, secondly, the Christian community is also open, i.e., flexible, insofar as "it can be realized in a variety of social structures." The accent lies on the second clause.

What J. C. Hoekendijk means by his comments has been developed by H. R. Weber in connection with the question of the assumption of service by all the members of the congregation. This is done in such bold and concrete detail as has not been previously undertaken. In a daring sketch of the "house-church,"²⁰⁸ H. R. Weber depends partly on J. C. Hoekendijk's concept of *oikos*,²⁰⁹ which necessarily raises the

²⁰⁵ We might again point out that, if these are not one and the same, at least they are two procedures most closely bound to one another.

²⁰⁶ Wedel, "Evangelism: An Essay in Criticism," *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁰⁷ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 174.

²⁰⁸ H. R. Weber, "The Church in the House," *Laity* III (April 3, 1957), 3-19. E. H. Robertson, "The House Church," in *Basileia. Walter Freytag zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. J. Hermelink and H. J. Margull, pp. 366-71.

²⁰⁹ Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk inde Duitse Zendingswetenschap*, pp. 238 ff.

question of "ordinological thinking." Accordingly, the traditional attachment of churches and parishes to the so-called natural orders of family, village community, city quarter, neighborhood, etc., is relativized in order to make room for proclamation. Such "room" must not be understood a priori,²¹⁰ but rather must be repeatedly discovered anew in the concrete, shifting situation according to the configurations of the confrontation. H. R. Weber also depends on English and Scottish reports²¹¹ or experiments with the "house church" which were initiated independently of J. C. Hoekendijk's elaboration of the *oikos* concept.

H. R. Weber also offers a fundamental evaluation of the existing structure of the congregation. He believes that the result of "ordinological thinking" is the desire to contact man amid the radical change of contemporary society and its development of new sociological forms: The Church "becomes

²¹⁰ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 7. In this connection it is to be noted that the Commission on Educational Questions of the Lutheran World Federation, in its report for the meeting at Minneapolis in 1957 (Commission on Educational Questions, *Report 1952-57* [Geneva, 1957], pp. 67 ff., 84 ff.), dealt with the "family as a home-congregation" and with the "congregational functions of the Christian home." Here "oikos" is understood in its primary, New Testament sense. As constituted in the "home-congregation," the "oikos" places the family "under spiritual rule" and so becomes "a part of the congregation, a little church community of its own within the Church, an 'ecclesiola in ecclesia' having its own church magistracy and service of worship alongside the local parish" (p. 69). The "oikos" as such is dependent on the local congregation. It does not have the right to administer the sacraments, and can derive the Word only from the "public proclamation," "which is conferred by the congregation upon the one holding the office of the Word" (p. 70). In its dependency, though, the "oikos" is independent. It possesses an "autonomous life of worship beyond that of the local congregation" through scriptural readings conjoined with discussion, through prayer and devotions liturgically determined by the "rhythm of the church year," and through "diakonia" (pp. 84 ff.). It is also independent inasmuch as in the parents it possesses its "own church government" (p. 70), which is "directly responsible to the Lord of the home-congregation" (p. 71). "The focal point of the home lies at the focal point of the home-congregation" (p. 78). The comments on the "home-congregation" are forthcoming in connection with the education of children. No reference is made to missions. The family, not the milieu, is the focal point in the report.

²¹¹ Above all on E. W. Southcott, *Parish Comes Alive* (London: Morehouse-Gorham, 1957), pp. 58 ff., a searching theological-sociological study on the problem; also, Southcott, "House-Church in Halton, Leeds," *Laity*, III (1957), 21-23. W. D. Cattanch, "House-Church in a Scottish Parish," *Laity*, III (1957), 24-27.

blind to the concrete social realities and evangelism tends therefore to become a hopeless invitation addressed to men and women, where they are not, to come to a place where they do not want to come."²¹²

In the Ecumenical Survey on France it is stated: "The territorial parish system is an anachronism, centered on a milieu where we no longer *live*."²¹³ But this difficulty can be met on the basis of "oikological thinking:"

The Church has first to discover that *oikos* without any preconceived ideas about the value of different social structures. And just as Christ came to man where he actually lived and worked, so the Church has to go to modern man in the concrete context of his *oikos*.²¹⁴

To the question of the "where" and the "how" of the *oikos*, H. R. Weber replies:

Because of the very differentiated and mobile structure of modern society there is not just one, but many types of "houses": it might be the street in a new housing area or the factory in a disintegrating rural area. And many persons will have more than just one main *oikos*.²¹⁵

According to H. R. Weber a "cellular structure"²¹⁶ of the local parish commends itself to this state of affairs. This

²¹² Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²¹³ *Evangelism in France*, p. 30. An extraordinarily precise basis for this statement is provided by E. R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, pp. 215 ff., esp. p. 262.

²¹⁴ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Weber refers to the conception of J. A. T. Robinson, "The House-Church and Parish-Church," *Theology Today*, VII (1950). On the notion and work of congregational cells, which have been developed especially by S. Shoemaker in Calvary Episcopal Church in New York (S. M. Shoemaker, *The Church Alive* [New York: Dutton, 1950]), cf., among others, *The Evanston Report*, Section VI. J. Winslow, "The Christian Cell," *World Dominion*, XXVIII (1950), 17-19. R. Lloyd, "Infectious Christian Cell," *World Dominion*, XXVIII (1950), 15-18. Also, Batten, pp. 113 f. E. R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, p. 225: "The Church in its local expression needs to devise a structure and machinery whereby the congregation is broken down into natural and indigenous groups that at the same time promote the pastoral care and training of the laity, and produce working groups for the spontaneous expansion of the Church within large amorphous populations." "House church" denotes a new congregational structure. Wickham's book, by reason of its scientific precision and breadth, is most important and productive for this new structure. He calls for "a structure supplementary to the parochial organization" (p. 245) corresponding in mobile and flexible congregational forms to the mobility and flexibility of the community (cf. p. 246).

would mean that small communities be formed out of the congregation and be held together in it through the Sunday worship of the entire congregation.²¹⁷ Not only would a sociological fact harassing the congregations in their evangelistic enterprise be thus taken into account, but also a part of the fruitful life of the early church would be rediscovered for the congregation. As was seen at Amsterdam, "the formation of a Christian community, in the place where people live, and within the framework of the natural community"²¹⁸ might come to pass; and the congregation might come to live in communities. The congregation itself is a "honeycomb of small units" and "a honeycomb of many miniature manifestations of the whole Church," "the organic union of such house-Churches."²¹⁹ Similarly, the survey on France contains a proposal for "the formation . . . of little groups in the different milieux . . . These functional groups should be brought together into a congregation which will then become a community-of-communities."²²⁰

It is important to note that the communities of the "house Church" are not conventicles or conversation circles or community interest-groups or any similar groups expressing that sort of community life ordinarily called "active." The communities of the "house Church" are none of these, let alone an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (which, of course, gives rise to the question whether such a misunderstanding can be avoided). As H. R. Weber very pointedly stresses, they are churches. Indeed, they are members of the universal Church in the *oikoumene*! H. R. Weber says: "If the house-Church is Church in the full sense of this word, the constituent elements for the house-Church are the same as for the Church in general."²²¹

²¹⁷ Thus "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²¹⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 161.

²¹⁹ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 8.

²²⁰ *Evangelism in France*, p. 30.

²²¹ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 8.

In the "house churches," therefore, Bible study, instruction, disciplining of the congregation, worship, and administration of the sacraments take place and must take place.²²² Through these means the "house churches" fully participate in church life. If the conception of "para-congregation," which has yet to be discussed, is grossly applied to the "house churches," the point is missed. With regard to the congregation's becoming congregation in connection with evangelism, H. R. Weber makes a striking statement on the "house church": ". . . the house-Church is the way in which the people of God learns to be the Church in the world."²²³

This statement characterizes the point at which his sketch aims and expresses the desire, which pervades the entire discussion on evangelism, that the church be in immediate proximity to that which confronts the church's message. The heartbeat of the discussion is plainly sensed at this point. For here, if construed in the original sense of the word, "sympathetic," the discussion reaches that moment of tension in which the complex problematic is resolved and the path sought for is disclosed. The *desideria*, which have been repeatedly contrasted in the discussion with the *gravamina*, are here fulfilled. Interpreted in the sense of the ecumenical discussion, this is to say: The experiment of the "house church"²²⁴ is a step in missionary action from the socially isolated parish to the new elements of confrontation and

²²² A concise description in *A Monthly Letter about Evangelism*, IV (2958).

²²³ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 10. Thompson (*The Church's Understanding of Itself*, p. 84) correctly states that through these small groups the congregations "would realize among themselves the relations of mutual trust, support and responsibility characteristic of Christian society."

²²⁴ A similar experiment, in which the individual stages of growth from a somewhat accidental beginning can be splendidly recognized, is described in P. B. Cliff, "The Church is the Mission," *World Dominion*, XXXIII (1955), 360-73. This deals with a congregation in England, and a Congregational one at that, while Southcott's work was performed in an Anglican congregation. On an attempt, independent of these, within a Lutheran congregation, which pursues the same direction, cf. H. Düll, "Die Nachbarschaft. Ein Weg zur Grosstadtgemeinde," *Die Kirche in der Welt. Studien zur oekumenischen Tagung des Luth. Weltbundes in Minn., 1957*, eds. T. Heckel and G. Lanzentiel (Munich: Evangelischer Presseverband fuer Bayern, 1957), pp. 91-96.

their forms of life. In the "house church," to retain this term, and therefore in the neighborhood community (and principally in it!) or in the cell in company or factory, immediate proximity is achieved to the forms and problems of contemporary life with which the gospel deals. Through the form of congregation as community, the way can be cleared for "a solution to the problem of incarnation in a structure of society wholly uninfluenced by the Christian tradition."²²⁵ Because this quest for the individual takes place within his own life-sphere, solidarity can come to the man who has lost or relinquished it in relation to the church. Genuine *identification in the imitation of Christ* becomes possible; and the first step in this course is an understanding unattainable outside of the world of the estranged. There must be identification with the man who has not been reached by the Christian message as presented up to now through mere talk or even mere exhortation. There must be identification even with the man disillusioned with the churches and their exclusive congregational life. There must be "such identification with man, with his sin, his hopes and fears, his misery and needs, that we become his brother and can witness from his place and condition to God's love for him."²²⁶ This venture into immediate proximity entails a far-reaching resolution of the pressing question as to the possibility of contact, which constitutes the decisive question for missionary action. Concomitant with this venture is unconditional openness. What is more, through the "house church" something of unlimited importance for all evangelism is achieved, namely, an *observable addressee*.

All in all, the fact and attempt of the "house church" represents — at any rate, in H. R. Weber's sketch — the possibility of a genuine *sociological presence* of the congregation. The congregation here receives its sociological validity as bearer

²²⁵ Hoekendijk, "The Evangelisation of Man in Modern Mass Society," *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²²⁶ *The Evanston Report*, p. 102.

of the gospel which has come into the world and makes its way into the world. In the "house church" it is possible to realize the demands which, in large church organizations, or even local parishes, must remain mere rhetoric, namely, the surrender of self and an all-pervasive presence in the world. At this point a number of questions agitate the ecumenical discussion on evangelism in connection both with the church as church and also with the church's missionary action in the present situation. These questions point to the answer sought, though expected somewhat differently. For now the tendency becomes apparent for the smallest and most intimate communities to gather into congregations, communities such as individual homes, street-blocks, offices, workshops, factories, and other similar social groups. This they do without severing the ties with the milieu from which they sprang: ". . . the Lord's Supper . . . celebrated in a kitchen on a week-day."²²⁷ In such circumstances missionary witness results quite naturally. H. R. Weber writes:

As soon as the Church really appears as living Christian community groups within the natural groups of society and as fellowship of serving action, the astonished "outsiders" will begin to ask questions. And now the Christian fellowship becomes quite spontaneously a witnessing fellowship.²²⁸

Missionary proclamation of the gospel (evangelism) now is no longer, as H. Kraemer puts it, an "approach" in the sense of "the attitude of the outsider, who tries to find an entrance into an alien world and thus to establish some sort of contact." Evangelism now becomes genuine "communication." "'Communication' implicitly confesses a given solidarity, taking one's stand in the world and as part of the world of the other, not over against that world . . ." ²²⁹ H. Kraemer calls this relation "communication between"²³⁰ and by that

²²⁷ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 28.

²²⁸ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

²²⁹ Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, pp. 60-61. Also in Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²³⁰ Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 11, and *passim*.

means the brotherly "Mit-Teilung" [communication], experienced in the concrete, present situation of joy and woe, of the life lived by Jesus Christ and shared by man, as the possibility of the "communication of" the message of Jesus Christ, which is "strictly objective." For "this history of God's great acts [has] . . . no point of contact in our life"²³¹ — no point of contact. If this line of thought is pursued, then, with reference to H. Kraemer's earlier statement that the missionary is the point of contact, the following may be said in connection with the significance of the community in evangelism: the community, enabled by faith to share the life of its environs or its milieu, represents the point of contact. At this point of contact the question of the gospel can become explicit or be made relevant.

What this means is best rendered in the words which W. Freytag discovered at Whitby (1947) on witness in evangelism:

The Word . . . needs the bridge of human confidence if it is to be understood. The messengers of the congregations live among the tribes; they do what they can to respect their customs; they earn their livelihood by their own hands and learn the language thoroughly. They live the same kind of life as the tribes, but they are entirely dissimilar to them. They are superior in culture. . . . Above all, they are unlike because they have other sources of spiritual power and because, in an uncomprehensible way, they do certain things and leave other things undone. They do not practise witchcraft and yet are free from fear. They are fearless and yet do not use arms. Formerly, they walked in the way of their ancestors, but now they live an entirely new life and, still more, they die an entirely new death.²³²

It is the community which "possesses its integrity as a Christian community"²³³ in the midst of the sociological circumstances, "the life of the congregation . . . as demonstrated by the life of Church members,"²³⁴ "full-orbed, full-dimensional

²³¹ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 172.

²³² Freytag, "The Articulate Word," in *Renewal and Advance*, p. 115.

²³³ R. Obermüller, *Evangelism in Latin America*, p. 32.

²³⁴ Freytag, "The Articulate Word," in *Renewal and Advance*, p. 120. This is said in connection with the situation in a totalitarian state, but it applies equally to the situation of secularism.

life in both personal and corporate form"²³⁵ — it is the community living in Christ that, within the contemporary social rupture, is the witness, living *with*, but *differently from* its environs:

It is and was and will be only the Christian congregation which confesses its Lord through suffering. . . . The Word becomes articulate only through a living congregation. It alone is the medium of communication to the community.²³⁶

The place of the individual as a witness is in the congregation, and nowhere else. The congregation, however, in which he can be a witness is the small community, which sustains him and which he sustains. For witness lives by its incorporation in the *koinonia*. From the *koinonia* the witness goes forth to man and with man the witness comes back to the *koinonia*. The heart of missionary action is the *koinonia*, which in the contemporary situation receives its form especially through the small community of men living for their Lord in the place assigned to them. In accordance with the ecumenical discussion, therefore, H. R. Weber's sketch of the "house church" declares correctly that the "house Church is definitely *not* just another evangelistic weapon, a technique for getting at those who could not be reached otherwise."²³⁷ On this basis the question of the congregation in communities is put to the churches as a fundamental one. Elsewhere H. R. Weber has written "that, during the time between Christ's ascension and His return, the Church lives and works mainly as a scattered community."²³⁸ Referring to a thesis of S. C. Neill,²³⁹ he has declared that the churches' task is "to form

²³⁵ J. A. Mackay, "With Christ to the Frontier," in *Renewal and Advance*, p. 202.

²³⁶ Freytag, "The Articulate Word," in *Renewal and Advance*, p. 120.

²³⁷ Weber, "The Church in the House," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²³⁸ H. R. Weber, "The Ministry of the Laity in the Missionary Outreach of the Church," *Student World*, XLIX (1956), 222.

²³⁹ S. C. Neill, *The Unfinished Task*, pp. 31 f., 59.

a Christian 'diaspora' in the midst of the pagan world, in order to prepare this world for the second coming of Christ at the end of time."²⁴⁰ The congregation forms this diaspora "by fostering small fellowships."²⁴¹ In this way the congregation is present in the world, i.e., the contemporary world.

The Working Committees of the Department on Evangelism and of the Department on the Laity expressed the same thought at their joint meeting in Herrenalb (1956), while at the same time elucidating the tension between "scattering" and "gathering":

The salt fulfils its function only if—after having been gathered and cleansed—it is scattered again to be dissolved. Likewise the people of God is gathered from all peoples, cultures and groups of society, in order to be scattered again. Therefore, the dissemination of the Church is as important as the gathering of the Church. Only through its dispersion can the Church function as salt of the earth. Only through its dissemination can the Church be present in the world where the real battles of faith are fought. We do not ignore the deep significance of the appearance of the Church when it is gathered; indeed, this gathered community is a mighty token of the Communion of the Saints, rendering praise to God on behalf of the world which is still scattered. But we would like to stress the fact that the gatherings of the Church must also be seen and shaped in the view of the dissemination of the Church. Because, during this time between Christ's ascension and return, the Church lives and works essentially as a "community of the dispersed." Only if we recover that Biblical rhythm between gathering and scattering can our churches become what they are meant to be: evangelistic communities, the salt of the earth.²⁴²

The congregation as confronted by the other communities

With reference to the secular organizations which have evolved amid the changes in the social structure of the West, many of which are extraordinarily consolidated and determinative of their members, the Report of Section II in Evanston states:

²⁴⁰ Weber, "The Ministry of the Laity . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 222.

²⁴¹ *The Evanston Report*, p. 102.

²⁴² *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, App. 3.

The companionship of those with whom (the individual) works largely determines the framework of his beliefs and attitudes. What has been and is still true of village life in Asia and Africa, where decisions are decisions of the group, is now true in many social environments in the West also. It has become imperative, therefore, that the gospel be addressed to the group as well as to the individual.²⁴³

Behind this statement lies an experience in evangelism in foreign countries which has now become important for Europe and America. To win a whole nation, one thing must, first of all, not be done. Individuals must not be uprooted from their own nation and transplanted to a foreign community. National communities become Christian if a movement towards Christ originates among the people themselves.²⁴⁴ "The Bridges of God" are the natural communities in which man lives: the family, clan, tribe, nation, group of nations, . . . or even the new social communities.

J. C. Hoekendijk's concern for the danger of dissolving the individual's ties with his milieu is thus sharpened, and in this context his urgent admonition must be understood that evangelism should not disrupt the milieu.²⁴⁵

Evangelism, basing its action on the small community attached to the congregation, is therefore to address itself to the secular communities as such. While seeking to grasp these as a whole — in "conversation with man in his concrete environment" (J. C. Hoekendijk)²⁴⁶ — evangelism is to complete the *invasion of the foreign milieu*.

The *Monthly Letter about Evangelism* offered an example of this work which can clarify the direction in which the "corporate representation of the Gospel within the group"²⁴⁷ is understood in the ecumenical discussion.

²⁴³ *The Evanston Report*, p. 104.

²⁴⁴ D. A. McGavran, *The Bridges of God* (New York: Friendship Pr., 1955), p. 10; cf. J. W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India* (New York: Abingdon Pr., 1933).

²⁴⁵ Hoekendijk, "Het apostolaat in Europa in het licht van enkele ervaringen van de Islam-zending," *Nederlandse Theologisch Tijdschrift*, VII (1952), 329.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

²⁴⁷ *The Evanston Report*, p. 56.

The report of G. van Veldhuizen²⁴⁸ on working through the congregation in Rotterdam-Crosswijk, one of the poorest quarters of the city, explicates two characteristic and basic features of this work. One feature is that the work is directed to the groups or communities *at hand*. There is no intention to dis sever men from these groups nor is there any attempt "to create new groups from the Church alongside the groups already in existence."²⁴⁹ The other feature of the work is that it creates possibilities for these communities to lead a true *community life* in the sense of the Christian *koinonia*. Contact with the communities is made through unpretentious service:

In the first place by being present and available, by creating different opportunities—parish houses, sport grounds, etc.—by appointing skilled youth leaders, social labourers and other young men and women to work in various ways.²⁵⁰

The contact is deepened in the communities themselves. This is accomplished by working with the children under the aspect of the "comprehensive approach," which in its fashion is exemplary for work in the adult groups:

We start all of the groupings with play. It may be playing with toys for the kiddies or with cards for the teenagers and elder ones. We continue with sports which demand team work and discipline—far too often a great problem for children who have never learned to be together in the world. In the third place we have our development groups with talks and conversations, with handwork, ballet, music, etc. At last we have our courses for more serious studies.²⁵¹

Through this work a road is built to the parents and neighbors of the children. House calls complete consideration of the children's whole environment.

²⁴⁸ G. van Veldhuizen, "Modern Evangelistic Methods in an Old Parish of Rotterdam," *Monthly Letter About Evangelism*, I (1958).

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

G. van Veldhuizen points out that his work is not preparation for subsequent proclamation of the gospel, but rather that it is permeated and borne by the "service of witnesses from the start." This service takes the form of attempting to help men in the "material, physical, psychic and social realms, . . . to live together with men and to speak to them in every sphere of their existence."²⁵² The transformation of the group which is accomplished in this way is expressed in the reclamation of the core of community life:

In the course of years we have found out that "gezelligheid"—that queer Rotterdam word for cosiness, beauty, peace, the realisation of being bound by norms, *eirene*, *sjaloom*—gives a group its essential value. We have also discovered that most groups are lacking in this "gezelligheid" . . . By living in those groups . . . by offering ourselves in services we have seen this "gezelligheid" increase, and their members learn to accept Christ as a centre of group and of personal life.²⁵³

Here "communication between," of which H. Kraemer rightly says that it can be truly and fully experienced only in Jesus Christ, is achieved in the existing community. The community has become *koinonia*, in which Christian life can cultivate itself in specifics. G. van Veldhuizen gives an example which illustrates the procedure well. After the individualistic-soteriological reasons for deciding for Christ have been abolished (a feature playing an essential role in the analysis of the contemporary situation!), the reasons of the secular community emerge. These have been encountered in missions from the start, but have only recently been recognized:

Our boxing club considered it God's protecting interference when a fortnight before a match one of the posts broke. They said: "You see, God has a hand in it! Such a thing would not happen at a church-match. God gives us time to restore things."²⁵⁴

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 2.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Again, see McGavran, *The Bridges of God*, for an example of an axiom of missionary science: "A change of religion involves a community change."

Finally, these communities hold their own services of worship with their own, new forms. Because they are concerned with "a knowing by heart, not only intellectually," the preaching is "a specimen of a conference, never a remonstrance, and always a story."²⁵⁵ In conclusion, G. van Veldhuizen remarks:

In 1948 the first gangs came to our buildings and from that time their number has increased. Today we receive every week about 3,000 people in our five homes. Kiddies and aged people, streetcorner societies, trade unions, boxing and sporting clubs, bands, etc., all come. It has been very useful to wait. We refrain from trying to Christianize those visitors after our own manner. We wait for the time when they come and ask us to render an account of the faith that is in us. We believe that the church must wait until this question is asked . . . Moreover, unless a conversation on this subject is held in an atmosphere of confidence, it will only be an intellectual discussion, without results.²⁵⁶

The report can be summarized with a selection from the Survey on Evangelism prepared for Evanston:

The Gospel must challenge and eventually permeate the prevailing thought and life forms of the group before any decision can be made. A Christian "cell" should demonstrate the dynamic of the Gospel, patiently and hopefully, before any relevant word can be spoken.²⁵⁷

In the discussion, which is substantially furthered by experience in evangelism to people and groups in Asia and Africa, the course leading into the new realm of confrontation is now disclosed. This is the course to working-class groups and, in essence, the course to the secular associations of the intellectual.²⁵⁸ All the intimations of this course which have been given from the start of the ecumenical discussion now come together.

²⁵⁵ Van Veldhuizen, "Modern Evangelistic Methods in an Old Parish of Rotterdam," *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁵⁷ *The Evanston Report*, p. 56: The draft added: ". . . all agreed that it is the group approach which is the most certainly hopeful and fruitful."

²⁵⁸ On the question of the intellectuals (although the consequences mentioned above are not seen in this article), cf. H. Lilje, "Opening Doors in the Intellectual World," *Ecumenical Review*, I (1948), 399-403.

This step in the discussion cannot be concluded without adding an example mentioned in the discussion. The example exhibits, on the one hand, what the preceding remarks do not mean, and, on the other hand, what results from expansion of institutionalized churches and not from evangelism.

A study made of a typical suburban community near New York City revealed a dynamic community life among the Roman Catholics, the Jews and the Protestants, with a high degree of participation based on a recognition of common responsibility for community welfare. Despite the usual problems of suburbia (conformity, materialism, etc.) this was a good example of people trying to solve the human problems of living together in a multiple society.

Later, the churches moved in with structures of social and "activity" groups, which not only divided the community, but apparently diverted concern from the problems of common citizenship to the preservation of denominational life. Each denomination began to do things of its own—discussion groups, sewing circles, baseball teams, etc. The study showed that where there was formerly some integrity and honest secularity, there was now a false spirituality. The consequence was less interaction among members of the community with consequent degeneration in human relations. The churches had taken over at last!²⁵⁹

The formation of a community alongside the congregation (para-congregation)

The path of the congregation leading to the diverse communities, including household communities, within the new climate of confrontation may lie through individuals or through their small communities ("house churches"). In either case, if the gospel has been accepted and if the existing community is not to be shattered, this path entails the question of an individual congregational life within these communities and alongside the present form of the church congregation. In the ecumenical discussion the question of the para-congregation—by no means to be regarded as a congregation only in a company or a factory—has been treated as a demand, though this has been done with some perplexity.

²⁵⁹ "A Theological Reflection on the Work of Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 33.

From the viewpoint of evangelism, two arguments are influential in support of forming and cultivating para-congregations. The first is:

As in the mission-field, traditionally so called, so in the modern mission-field, the great danger lies in taking the Christian out of his environment.²⁶⁰

This could only be done at the price of complete separation from their life environment. Inquirers and eventually converts should stay in their milieu, there to be the Church, with its own indigenous forms and patterns.²⁶¹

While it becomes possible to live as a Christian within one's own sociological locale, at the same time the possibility is created for further witnessing service on the part of those who have been won in their own milieu and whose community, as a new "house church," is the point of departure for forming further communities. This possibility of missionary action would be frustrated, were it not allowed to lead to the formation of a community fitted for the milieu.

H. D. Wendland stands within the context of the ecumenical discussion when he demands that we "go to meet the emigrants and go forward with them to new shores in order to build *new churches* there." "We here plead for freedom for new forms of Christian congregations, beyond the boundaries of the old local parishes."²⁶² The other argument influential in support of forming and cultivating para-congregations is that the "social distance between their 'world' and the contemporary form of church life is too great to be overcome all at once."²⁶³ The fear is that the process of

²⁶⁰ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 160.

²⁶¹ *The Evanston Report*, p. 56. Here is a problem that has long been familiar to evangelists in foreign countries; *Evangelism in India*, p. 22 (cf. pp. 27-28, 29-30): "The task . . . is to seek by all possible means to eliminate what is foreign in the Christianity introduced from the West."

²⁶² H. D. Wendland, "Verkuendigung der Kirche heute," *Informationsblatt*, V (1956), p. 350 (my italics).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

assimilating may be obstructive to the disquieting encounter with the gospel and could lead to a false situation of decision and consequently to an enslavement of conscience:

It is one thing to get new-comers into the Church, and quite a different thing to keep them there once they have been won. Can a man be taken out of his secular world and be made immediately "at home" in the Church?²⁶⁴

Because this is a problem of adoption into the existing parish, there seems to be a need for a transitional community. "There should be 'halfway houses between this world and the Church,' *para-Churches*."²⁶⁵ Both arguments are surely significant for the situation and action of evangelism in the areas foremost in the ecumenical discussion. They become of the greatest importance if, as has often been remarked, the great task is considered which lies before the churches and which will always lie before them, as far as can be seen. This task is the proclamation of the message to men in communism and Islam, primarily on the part of the churches which have been religiously and sociologically overrun by these movements. Can there be a return for Communists and Muslims to the (socially isolated) churches, which previously were consciously renounced and which have not on the whole changed since? It is absolutely necessary to avoid de-emphasizing or overlooking this aspect in evaluating the question.

There is also another aspect. The problem can be approached both through the ecumenical view of the churches and through the view of the churches characteristic of evangelism as practiced in foreign missions. If approached through the latter view, the problem may be very crudely conceived against the background of the legitimate sociological distinction between European and African congregations and against the background of Christians' decisions of conscience differentiated through their presuppositions. Christians make

²⁶⁴ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, App. 4.

²⁶⁵ *The Evanston Report*, p. 56.

these decisions while confronted not only by the doctrine being transmitted to them, but also by the customs of Christian life. If the attempt is made to conceive the problem in the perspective of both these views, i.e., the ecumenical view of the churches and the view of the churches characteristic of evangelism in foreign missions, then the question of the para-congregation might be put into a new light, a theologically pertinent light. Consequently, many antagonistic opinions might be withdrawn.

On the basis of the exigencies of evangelism and out of pastoral motives, J. C. Hoekendijk not only agrees with the notion of the para-congregation, but bluntly demands it. He asserts its value, though, only for a short, *transitional period* and clearly sees the danger threatening the local congregation if the para-congregation be accepted too lightly:

We should realize that as soon as these half-way communities between Church and world become a permanent feature, we have in fact given up hope for the Church. We conceive of it then as a body definite and static, over against the world as the other static entity. And this is nothing less than despair of establishing shalom in the Church and of realizing the koinonia.²⁶⁶

This thought points unambiguously to the question as to how existing parishes become church. To extend Hoekendijk's line of thought: The problem of the para-congregation is primarily the problem of the local congregation. It originates by reason of the sociological imprisonment of the local congregation. In this problem the local congregation is faced with the serious question of the binding force of its form and the validity of its self-understanding. And because the problem of the local congregation is a sociological one, the para-congregation, which is developed under evangelism, is

²⁶⁶ Hoekendijk, "The Call to Evangelism," *op. cit.*, p. 174.

in turn imprisoned sociologically.²⁶⁷ The secularization of the local congregation entails the secularization of the para-congregation.

Up to now the ecumenical discussion has not moved in its explicit statements beyond exposition of this state of affairs. The problem is still open. In fact, the further development of the traditional local congregation and of the incipient para-congregation is also open. If the levelling social tendencies, especially in western Europe, be taken into consideration and if the new powers accruing to the local congregations be contemplated, then it is only a question of time before, on the whole, one solution of the problem will be realized. This is the sociological side of the problem concerning the para-congregations, which already exist or are anticipated directly. The state of affairs would be rendered commensurately more difficult if consideration were directed to new congregations in lands ruled by communism or in Islamic areas. The theological side of the problem is the question of how great a measure of the gospel's transforming power can be expected. By no means is the sociological component lightly esteemed; but, in short, it is subordinated to the hope. After all the preceding considerations, this is the decisive point. If the discussion is to continue from this point, it will have to ask the question: Will not the witness to be expected of and also borne by the local congregation, though restricted in the first instance, geographically and sociologically, lead

²⁶⁷ The power of sociological factors is shown by an example which, though not deriving from the immediate sphere of the problem of the para-congregation, yet is illuminating due to its indirect connection with the problem. In *Evangelism in India*, p. 51, it is reported that most of the Christians in South India voted for Communists. The following case is mentioned: "A well-known Christian leader, from a high caste family, well educated, and a man of integrity stood in the elections opposed by an almost illiterate Hindu of no proven value. There were tens of thousands of Christian voters, and had even five thousands of them voted for one of their own leaders, he would have won easily. But he lost. Even pastors were heard to say, 'Vote for the Communist, he is one of our community.' Social background took precedence." The conclusion is drawn: "The witness can become effective only in social dimensions, constantly expanded beyond any of the bounds of class from which the Church has come" (p. 52).

further toward the center, just as the geographically and sociologically restricted witness expected of the para-congregations will do? In both cases, it would be recognized that confession of Christ, as confession before the world, separates witnesses from the world and makes witnesses of differing origins and environments brothers. The presupposition, though, is evangelism, in which, as the history of the ecumenical movement shows, the experience of *oikoumene* initially emerges. And that always includes the experience of patience, respect, and compassion. To put it more strongly: The resolution of the question lies in the extent to which the eschatological orientation of Christians of "quite different tongues" is grasped. It is the question of the unity of Christianity — and obviously the question of the church as church. The following statement from another viewpoint by H. Kraemer is also relevant here: "The way towards becoming an indigenous Church goes through becoming first a real Church."²⁶⁸

Viewed in this context, it is possible to let the unresolved question of the para-congregations stand for the present, if only the question is not historically assessed in a one-sided fashion on the basis of existing local congregations!

The individual in the community

If the leading line of thought effected in the discussion, i.e., that the community is the bearer and locale of missionary action, is to receive its full value, then the individual must be understood in his missionary service as a *member of the community*. Of course, this by no means signifies that as an individual he is insignificant in the community. The community is just as dependent on him as he is on it. He lives by the community as *koinonia*; but he is the one who speaks in and for the community.

²⁶⁸ Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 411.

The Report of Section II at Evanston fully recognized the importance due the individual despite the stress placed on the community: "The first area of evangelism is our own inner life."²⁶⁹ D. T. Niles, in his sermon at Evanston, accented this point strongly. "It is . . . easy to have a correct theology of evangelism and still to remain a man to whose hands the great Shepherd can not entrust his sheep."²⁷⁰ A community can live as *koinonia* only if it is formed of men with living faith, and furthers that faith.

Similarly, in the community confronting evangelism, the *individual* is intended to hear the gospel. For the gospel applies, not to a system, but to the individual man. S. C. Neill is criticising the general tendency of the discussion on social questions when he writes:

I wonder myself whether a great deal of the present discussion has not occupied itself with evading the real issues. . . . For all the talk about sociological factors and so forth, it remains the fact that man is an individual, and that evangelism must mean sooner or later bringing the individual to the point of direct and personal confrontation with God in Jesus Christ. . . . The Christian hope does mean that there is hope for the individual here and now, while it is called to-day.²⁷¹

If the individual himself is not encouraged to decide between belief and disbelief and if this encouragement is not the core of work in existing communities and in the para-congregations, then, S. C. Neill continues, it may well be purely a matter of "pre-evangelism or *praeparatio evangelica*," which would introduce a serious misunderstanding of evangelism. Evangelism means *man* in his community. If evangelism turns to the community which the individual lives in and is tied to, then it can do so only because it is seeking the individual himself as a person before God in all his associations. Then it is possible—but only in this order!—for the ecumenical discussion to join with the evangelical focus of Pietistic stamp, from which it sprang in a great measure. The discussion will

²⁶⁹ *The Evanston Report*, p. 103.

²⁷⁰ Niles.

²⁷¹ S. C. Neill in a letter to the author, November 11, 1957.

then have to find as clear an expression on the question of *conversion* as it has found on the question of the congregation as a community which faces the natural communities confronting evangelism. "The object of Evangelism is conversion, conversion to Christ and personal discipleship to him."²⁷² Only now and only in this context should and must the ecumenical discussion deal with the question of evangelism in congregations actually assembled — which to the present has received only approbation. Usually this question is raised initially, with the result that the true point of evangelism can never be comprehended. This is the question of conversion within the congregation.

Conversion means changed authority! It takes place through belief in God's great deed with the world as it occurred hiddenly in Jesus Christ and as it will become manifest in him, and on which great deed the congregation is gathered throughout the world under obedience to the faith (Rom. 16:26). "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." "All Christian preaching is preaching for conversion" (J. Schniewind).

THE CALL FOR THE LAITY (LAOS)

Through the churches' missionary action in their congregations and the congregations' missionary action in their small communities, the members of the congregation, as components of God's people, incur not only a decisive task, but the very task to which God calls them in baptism and in which he admits them to service. The preceding has made this clear.

It has also been pointed out that, in contrast to the role which has been ascribed to the laity in the popular church of the *Corpus Christianum*, another form must be developed, which in the discussion is called the "new layman."²⁷³

²⁷² Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 82.

²⁷³ Wickham, "Evangelism and Changes in the Life of the Churches," *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Davos, Preparatory Paper 7*, p. 6.

Through this question the Department on the Laity has exercised its function in the World Council and was assigned an important place in the ecumenical discussion. The question of the laity is with propriety called the "Basis of Action."²⁷⁴

The discussion on the laity has yielded such rich and valuable results in its several points that it would require a separate study in its own right to indicate and interpret only the most important conclusions.²⁷⁵ Because this cannot be done here, we shall confine ourselves in what follows to mentioning a few essential points from this discussion which are important for the question of evangelism and are indicative of the direction the discussion on this question is taking.

H. R. Weber describes the task of the laity in speaking of the church's four modes of living:

- i) the ministry of *representing* the victorious but still hidden Lord of lords and King of kings in the midst of the country which is still occupied by the enemy;
- ii) the ministry of *heralding* the Lord's victory and His coming triumphant entry into His reign, the world;
- iii) the ministry of *erecting signs* of the reconciliation which has been gained at the Cross, and signs of the coming Kingdom;
- iv) the ministry of *suffering* with Christ for the sake of the world.²⁷⁶

These four modes of living occur within the two fundamental dimensions of Christian life, i.e., "to *be with* Christ" and "to *be sent out*, in order that the *world* may believe."²⁷⁷ On the question of the church becoming church and of the formation of a congregation, it was seen that these two dimensions

²⁷⁴ G. K. A. Bell, *Kingship of Christ* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 150.

²⁷⁵ Cf. J. Ellul, *Presence of the Kingdom*, trans. O. Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Pr., 1952). H. Kraemer, *Theology of the Laity* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1958). Also see the publications of the Department on the Laity, World Council of Churches.

²⁷⁶ Weber, "The Laity in the Apostolic Church," *Ecumenical Review*, X (1958), 287, 291.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

must be kept separate methodologically, but not theologically. At the same time, it was demonstrated that one dimension cannot exist without the other. Accordingly, it was intimated that faith becomes concrete only where the venture of faith is effected in evangelism to the world. The deliberations in the discussion on the question of the laity move in a similar direction. Consequently, the following elements repeatedly emerged.

The primary and basic assertion was that laymen belong where they are, *de facto*, in their occupations and their group relationships, i.e., in the workaday world and outside the sphere of the congregation. This means that the position of laymen must be confirmed as a position in the world. Theirs is "a task in the world outside."²⁷⁸ Therefore, their share in the proclamation — "sharing Christ's ministry in the world"²⁷⁹ — must be realized in the world. H. R. Weber has the courage for a very simple task in mind, with which all proclamation begins, when he speaks of "the gossiping of the Gospel."²⁸⁰ He regards this as the first and decisive step toward a "spontaneous missionary church" which lives in the world through a host of unknown witnesses.

The second element, related to the first, is propounded very emphatically. Biblically, and in conformity with the tasks before the church, it is inadmissible for laymen to be adjoined to the ministry as handymen, i.e., to let their service be completely exhausted within the congregation. This treats the laity as minors in their immediacy to Christ's commission and reduces their value for the world. On the contrary, the ministry must be adjoined to the service of the laity.

The third element follows from the preceding. The attention of the pastor should as much as possible be concentrated on and primarily directed to the service of the laity, which represents the congregation in the world: "It is the pastor

²⁷⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 216.

²⁷⁹ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, App 3.

²⁸⁰ Weber, "The Laity in the Apostolic Church," *op. cit.*, p. 292.

and other professional Church workers who have to assist the laity to carry out their ministry in the world.”²⁸¹ This requires of the pastor “a new conception of the ministry”:

His main task is the building up of the Church which is sent and disseminated in the world as a witnessing and ministering community. The work of ministers and clergy as well as other Church workers consists therefore mainly in the counselling of counsellors and the teaching of teachers; they are the biblical and theological instructors and advisors of the laity and they lead the “royal priesthood” of the whole Church in its worship.²⁸²

Vis-à-vis the “house church,” the task of the pastor is to equip the various “house churches” of his congregation “for their priestly task in their ‘house’ ”²⁸³ so that “every member of the body of Christ and of his Church may serve without qualification.”²⁸⁴ In the discussion on the question of the laity and on evangelism, this last element is expected to provide not only the most important and simplest test for the pastor and his congregation to prove themselves, but also for the congregation’s addressing itself to missionary action. “Where this action of the laity becomes accepted and undertaken,” E. R. Wickham explains, “there would be the profoundest changes in the life and structure of the Church, in the local church, in the Church in relation to the City, and in the Church nationally organised.”²⁸⁵ D. T. Niles says, “When the Christian laymen are able to make their day-to-day work Christian work, then will happen the greatest revolution of our time.”²⁸⁶

At this point a theology of the laity would have to be initiated by means of the ecumenical discussion. Such a theology is of utmost importance for the theology of evangelism.

²⁸¹ *Minutes . . . Working Committee . . . Herrenalb*, App. 3.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ Weber, “The Church in the House,” *op cit.*, p. 17.

²⁸⁴ *Documents of the World Council of Churches*, Amsterdam, 1948, V, 205; cf. on this question especially Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City*, pp. 250 ff.

²⁸⁵ Wickham, *Evangelism and Changes in the Life of the Churches*, pp. 6-7.

²⁸⁶ Niles, *That They May Have Life*, p. 60.

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PART THREE

*The Oikoumene—Proclamation
and Unity*

“The unity lies in the command and in the goal.
The task of preaching the Gospel under the
End is entrusted to the community of Jesus
Christ in its entirety.”

Walter Freytag

VII

One Church in One World

The Archbishop of Canterbury in 1910, while attending the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, formulated the phrase, "The whole world in closest, speediest touch."¹ This concise formulation, which was devised at the beginning of the ecumenical movement, well characterizes the new condition now developing for both world and church. The preceding presentation of the ecumenical discussion on evangelism has perhaps indicated the degree to which this development has affected the theological work of the discussion. It is in fact no longer possible to deliberate theologically on evangelism unless due consideration is granted to a pair of factors of growing importance. They are more and more playing a fundamentally determinative role in theology and are drawing an expanding circle of men into the discussion. "For the first time in history the Church today encompasses the world. It faces a problem of world-wide scope, the revolt of the human will against God."² The second factor, which appears concomitantly with the first, is that theological questions are now being formulated entirely anew or at least with new emphases.

In the ecumenical movement the question of the unity of the church is on the whole viewed with regard to its eschatological connotations and with regard to the confrontation with which the proclamation is faced. Consequently the question can no longer be considered in the ecumenical movement primarily and solely in the context of uniting something

¹ *World Missionary Conference, 1910* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), IX, 149.

² S. C. Neill, "Kirchen," in *Amsterdamer Dokumente. Berichte und Reden auf der Weltkirchenkonferenz in Amsterdam 1948* (Bethel, 1948).

that now exists in separation. Rather, in the context of the destruction of the *Corpus Christianum* as a world secure for Christianity, of the origin and growth of the Asian and African churches, of the missionary extension of the churches throughout the world, which is now fully recognized to be an "unfinished task"—when placed in such contexts, the question of the unity of the church must wait until the churches allow themselves to be defined biblically, i.e., to be defined in terms of their anticipatory attitude toward the world in virtue of the coming of Christ. If this question, which must be explicated from the aspect of *missions and unity*, is viewed correctly, it carries a number of consequences for theological work as well as for church action.

The question of missions and unity is closely allied with the question of the interdependence of *missions and evangelism*. With regard to the ecumenical discussion on evangelism in particular, the latter question, the interdependence of missions and evangelism, especially brings to bear two problems which must be discussed within the framework of once-valid formulations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPHERES IS REDUCED

In preparation for the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, only those missionary bodies were asked to send delegations to the deliberations which were working among men of non-Christian religions. Delegations were not invited from missionary bodies working in Roman Catholic Latin America or among members of the Orthodox churches in the eastern Mediterranean area. The judicious decision to limit the conference in this way indicates both that the understanding of missions had settled into a pattern and that, as was certainly to be expected, the division of the world into Christian and non-Christian spheres was an accepted way of thinking at Edinburgh.

The same categories of Christian and non-Christian spheres underlay the first comprehensive and scientific elaboration of missions, written by G. Warneck. His book, which is worthy of note even today, contributed to the Edinburgh decision. According to G. Warneck missions are the

planting and organization of the Christian Church among non-Christians. . . . Missions, therefore, are not aimed at Christendom, but at the whole non-Christian world insofar as it consists of Jews, Mohammedans, and heathens. [Missionaries are] those messengers of Christ who in a real sense are sent beyond the boundaries of Christendom in order to spread the kingdom of God among the non-Christians there.³

Missions as depicted here are situated within the Asian and African spheres, which the non-Christian religions have permeated and dominate religio-culturally. It must be stressed that the classical missionary situation, by reason of the antecedent history of the Asian-African sphere, is still applicable there to a certain extent in contrast to the European-American sphere. Missions in the classical and strict sense of the word are aimed at the men in Asia and Africa (including the non-Christianized groups of inner Australia and the pagan groups around Hudson Bay and in the Guineas).

The clear, vertical component which defines this horizontal determination of the missionary situation lies in unbaptized men. G. Warneck is only drawing a logical conclusion from this position when he writes: "The work of Christianizing the Indians and Chinese in North America constitutes missions in the genuine sense of the word, for it is aimed at non-Christians."⁴ The missionary situation, then, is found in its classical form among those who are not baptized and is confined to them. Today, due to the unaltered importance of baptism, this is still fundamentally applicable. *Missions* lead to *baptism*.

³ G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre* (2d ed.; Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1897), I, 1 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

If the missionary situation must always be regarded initially in this strict, classical sense, then in the present day, when the situation must again be ascertained, the question arises, Is the classical missionary situation the only criterion for the determination of missions? We have already seen how the new confrontation in which missions are engaged weakens the position formulated by G. Warneck materially, if not fundamentally. The sociological dimension has emerged alongside the geographic as a new missionary category.

The formulation of the question has been dislodged from its "fixed" points of reference, the notion of spheres and baptism, and is given another, the *message*. Massive and dynamic movements are astir among the elements with which the proclamation is confronted. By virtue of such movements exploration of the situation must be approached in an entirely new manner theologically and with a fresh theological view of the message and the world. This exploration of the situation necessarily reduces the importance of fixed historical factors because of the character of the Word, which repeatedly breaks through of itself. Such exploration can only be an "exploration of the situation with regard to the Word."⁵ W. Freytag comments by way of expansion that in Holy Scripture "the concept of the Gentiles [is] a corresponding concept,"⁶ in the sense that the Gentiles are always spoken of in relation to the people of God, whom they confront. Consequently, what constitutes a pagan biblically cannot be dogmatically determined "in itself." Nor can it be ascertained on the basis of a Christian history of religion or of Christian categories. What constitutes a pagan is, instead, determined through the proclamation of the acts of God with its message strictly of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ — a proclamation which be-

⁵ This useful formulation comes from J. Konrad, "Zum Thema Verkuendigung und Situation," in *Festschrift fuer Guenther Dehn*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1957), p. 215.

⁶ W. Freytag, *The Gospel and the Religions* ("I.M.C. Research Pamphlet," No. 5 [London: S. C. M. Pr., 1957]), p. 31.

comes an act itself: "The essential nature of heathendom cannot therefore be understood as long as we seek to understand it as something in itself, without reference to these events."⁷ The pagan manifests himself as such in confronting the message negatively. He does not want to belong to the people of God. He does not want to be gathered with a view to the future of Christ. The concept is a dynamic one.

Concerning the concept *kerussein*, H. Traub has stated:

The proclamation does not happen *in* a given situation. For the proclamation there is no objective situation existing beforehand to investigate and to understand. Rather, proclaiming Jesus creates the "situation." Proclaiming—as it stands under the *exelthon!*—is *constitutive* proclamation. The situation lies in the Word.⁸

It is the gospel and the gospel alone which determines and as such qualifies in a special way that with which missions are confronted! Herein lies the new formulation.

As the question of the missionary situation has been advanced so far, it is not inconsequential but rather questionable from a biblical viewpoint. In the way the question is put, it lacks compelling evidence and involves the danger of binding the gospel. Such a danger may be readily detected in the "quietism" of the churches confronted by the new sociological conditions or in the misunderstanding of these conditions as a "sphere" of genuine missionary action.

This new formulation also elicits acceptance of the Amsterdam decision. The decision cannot be understood or accurately evaluated in the ecumenical discussion if regarded from the aspect of the missionary situation as defined by G. Warneck. This is a new formulation of the question and a new answer. The answer is no longer a matter of strict theological differentiation between missions and evangelization, but rather the absorption of the latter into the former.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸ H. Traub, "Zur Verkuendigung von dem Verkuendigung Jesus Christus," in *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda, Evangelische Theologie, Sonderheft Ernst Wolf zum 50. Geburtstag* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1952), p. 125.

The answer, as given in view of Evanston, now involves missionary proclamation (evangelism) which is directed to the world. Theological distinction among separate spheres of the world is not so important now as formerly. The world confronts the message and, on the basis of the hope, presents itself as the *single sphere for proclamation*.

BAPTISM IS SECULARIZED

The question also arises at this point whether being baptized might constitute the final and conclusive criterion for the inapplicability of evangelism as understood here vis-à-vis those who have already been baptized.

The new formulation of the question has become pressing with regard to the problem of infant and adult baptism as this problem dominated the theological discussion of the early postwar years through the impetus supplied by K. Barth.⁹ The new formulation includes not only the problem of baptizing and believing, but another problem that has been almost entirely overlooked in the endeavor to determine the testimony of the New Testament on the practice of baptism. This problem, which is far more complex than the first and which, strictly speaking, can be clearly understood only on the basis of the ecumenical discussion on the church, is that of the churches (as they presently exist — without missions) and their baptizing.

In formulating the question of infant and adult baptism, the North American Conference on Faith and Order held at Oberlin (1957) issued a statement on the problem of baptizing and believing;¹⁰ but, more significantly, the question was left open of what responsibility the churches have for those

⁹ K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe* ("Theol. Studien," No. 14 [Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1943])

¹⁰ "Report of Section 3: Baptism Into Christ," *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, ed. P. S. Minear, pp. 196, 199. Cf. H. H. Harms, "Oberlin 1957," *Oekumenische Rundschau*, VII (1958), 86-90. Also cf. *Report of the Youth Faith and Order Consultation on Baptism and Confirmation held at 'De Hoerneboeg', Holland, January 6-11, 1958* (Geneva, 1958).

who have been baptized but for whom baptism did *not entail conversion*. This is the actual and embarrassing problem which the new formulation of the question has provoked. This is the familiar dilemma afflicting the popular church (in its later stages) or churches of this type when the Christian society which they have stamped and sustained disintegrates or fades from the scene.

The following comments on secularized baptism are prompted by the boldness of the questions in the ecumenical discussion on evangelism. "Secularized baptism" as used here is provocatively intended to refer to indiscriminate baptizing by the churches, especially in connection with their demonstrated incapacity to meet fully the responsibility which infant baptism imposes upon them. The question is intended to clarify understanding of a situation following the lifeless, almost resigned course of the debate on baptism.

H. Gollwitzer writes:

Formerly our questionable baptismal praxis was not recognized . . . but the damage done by indiscriminate baptizing can no longer be ignored. Baptism may be practiced by a church which as a living community supports and guides the children baptized into it, trains them through its living influence, instructs them in Christian faith from an early age, and leads them from baptism to the Lord's Supper. This is quite different, though, from the orientation of most churches, in which baptism remains an isolated affair. It is not followed by any community life of the baptized with church or the church with the baptized, but at best superficial confirmation classes. . . . Even if it can be determined that infant baptism was probably practiced by the primitive congregations, that does not prove it to be a legitimate possibility under far different circumstances of our current state churches. Until the Constantinian era, adult baptism preponderated in the church. Through adult baptism the unity of baptism and confession was daily given vivid expression for the church. The atmosphere of the church was defined by the baptismal confession as a decision which had incisive consequences for the life of the candidate for baptism. As a community sharply contrasting itself with the pagan milieu, the church immediately and concretely engaged this candidate in its instruction and training. Today conditions have changed, and we cannot create them artificially.

It should be clear to us, though, that our wasteful use of baptism is not justified by the probable practice of infant baptism in early Christianity.¹¹

Baptism becomes secularized when the churches come to rely on a Christian sphere within the world which "critical exploration of the situation on the basis of the Word" no longer finds to exist. Similarly, baptism is secularized when, despite every sort of effort, the churches ready themselves quite superficially if not wholly rhetorically to meet their baptized where they are. The churches thus perform what they regard as their chief pastoral function; and exclusively for this function do they train their future functionaries. In like manner baptism is secularized by the baptized. In the absence of an emphatic proclamation of baptism, they seek, not so much for themselves as for their children, to insure or to guarantee baptism as a salvation which is either "un-evangelical" or even "sub-evangelical." In general, they consider baptism to be a tradition which is not ultimately binding. For them baptism is merely a traditional practice which has lost its meaning but which has retained its religious aspect because this has always been the most tenacious element. Baptism is secularized when the baptized no longer realize — not in just a few cases but to an extent incapable of overestimation — that Jesus Christ, into whom they were baptized, is Lord and actually their Lord in particular. A state of affairs has resulted in which *the sacrament is actually devoid of the Word*. Furthermore, in the new reality, the problem of baptism is, strictly speaking, no longer one of baptism and faith as it has always been in the past due to the role of temptation. Now, much more trivially, it is a problem of *baptism and knowledge!*

This situation renders the task of evangelism, posed by baptism already administered, more acute.

¹¹ H. Gollwitzer, "Theologisches Gutachten ueber die 'Freigabe der Erwachsenentaufe,'" *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

BAPTISM AS THE CRITERION

Is baptism even as secularized baptism the criterion which decides whether a situation is pastoral or missionary and whether the proclamation is to be called *pastoral* or *missionary*? As far as can be seen, the Amsterdam decision was reached amid evasion of this criterion. The issue was handled too facilely theologically. This explains why profound reflection has not been forthcoming in the discussion on the problem of the relationship between evangelism in the West and the East (from the aspect of classical preaching to the pagans). While we seek to define this relationship critically in determining the concept of evangelism, the discussion might at the same time be directed not only to the problem, but also to the problem of baptism, difficult as this may be. Even in its greatest perversion, baptism remains baptism simply because God's outreach to man and his gift to man cannot be annulled: "My faith does not make baptism" (Luther). This fact can be disregarded only from a sectarian standpoint, which would certainly not be ecumenical! Inasmuch as the discussion does not base evangelism on an inquiry into the state of salvation of that with which evangelism is confronted, but on the love of God, baptism can now make itself felt with utmost transparency as the seal of the love of God.

VIII

The Course of the Ecumenical Discussion on Two Questions: Missions and Evangelism as Interdependent; Missions and Unity

The question of missions and unity was raised in essence as early as 1910 during the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. The question pervades the conferences of the World Missionary Council beginning with the question of co-operation among the various missions. This initial stage was followed by the question of the relationship between church and missions. In turn, the question of determining the relationship between missions and the unity of the church arose. The question of missions and evangelism as theologically interdependent is of more recent date. It was in the offing at Tambaram (1938) and Whitby (1947) and was explicitly mentioned at Amsterdam (1948). In the World Council of Churches the latter question has been of greater influence than the former.

THE AMSTERDAM DECISION (MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM)

The Amsterdam decision states "that the problems of the proclamation of the Gospel in East and West are fundamentally the same, and that old distinctions are out of date."¹ H. Kraemer had already written with regard to Tambaram "that the Christian Church, religiously speaking, in the West as well as in the East is standing in a pagan, non-Christian world, and has again to consider the whole world its mission field, not in the rhetorical but in the literal sense of the

¹ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 13.

word.”² Among other statements the following occur in the documents from Tambaram:

The churches everywhere, whether young or old, are in a world that is not in any true sense Christian. In no land is the cause won.³

This task today includes the preaching of the Gospel in the lands of both the older and the younger churches. In both cases the task is unfinished, for there are large geographical areas as well as areas of life in the lands of the older churches which need to be evangelized anew, and still greater areas where the meaning of the gospel is unknown.⁴

These comments, which the experiences of World War II proved reasonable, produced an aftereffect on the Provisional Committee of the World Council. The Committee's Report of 1947 states: “The situation in the West becomes increasingly similar to that in the East.”⁵

The Amsterdam decision was achieved substantially through the leadership of H. Kraemer, who was chairman of the Preparatory Commission of Section II at Amsterdam. Since Tambaram his theological efforts have been the subject of increasing attention within the ecumenical discussion. His basic positions must be mentioned again because of their influence on the question under discussion here: the discontinuity of the biblical revelation with every religion and world view, and the consequent discontinuity of the church with the world and its forms of community; the break with the *Corpus Christianum* conception and every way of thinking affected by it; the “diaspora” situation of the church as church (theologically and actually) throughout the world; the eschatological determination of message and church.⁶ For

² H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, pp. 16–17.

³ *The Authority of the Faith* (“The Madras Series: Presenting Papers Based upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938,” Vol. I), p. 203.

⁴ “The Unfinished Evangelistic Task,” *The Authority of the Faith*, III, 407–08.

⁵ *Documents of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam 1948*, p. 63.

⁶ Cf. the sections, “The renunciation of the conception of ‘Corpus Christianum’” and “The Church as Church.”

H. Kraemer these presuppositions always contained sharp criticism of the present character and institutionalization of the churches. At the same time they were also drawn upon most powerfully to force the churches to positive decisions. The work which the churches directed to those alienated from them had long been understood as "evangelization," that is, as special preaching to congregations. Solely through H. Kraemer's presuppositions is it possible to understand how the decision was reached whereby the former evangelistic work of the churches was replaced with evangelism by the church to the ends of the earth and with a view to the end of time.

Similarly, the Commission's deliberations preceding Amsterdam were strongly influenced by H. Kraemer's thoughts on theological analysis of the situation in the Western countries. It appears that extreme differences of opinion on this question were rife within the Commission. Even S. C. Neill, who was sympathetic in essence with the implications for missions of H. Kraemer's basic positions, was from the very beginning not in full accord with him on this question. In the program of studies for the assembly, published in 1947 and drafted by S. C. Neill, one section is entitled, "Why is the world of today not more Christian?"⁷ In the preparatory volume for Section II, however, the corresponding section is entitled, "Our un-Christian world."⁸ In the program of studies the religious situation in the Western countries is analyzed as follows:

1. "Where the Christian tradition is still preserved.
2. Where the break with the past is the strongest.
3. Secularized men in Christian countries."⁹

In the preparatory volume this differentiation was largely abandoned, though not wholly withdrawn. Under the title, "A World Task," H. Kraemer wrote at the beginning of the volume:

⁷ *Studienprogramm Amsterdam*, p. 54.

⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 36.

⁹ *Studienprogramm Amsterdam*, pp. 54-55.

Everywhere rival faiths and secular gospels, in the East as well as in the West, are competing for the allegiance of man, or want to make him their subservient instrument. . . . The Christian churches find themselves in an unparalleled missionary situation, not only in the "non-Christian" world, but as emphatically in the so-called "Christian" world. . . . Older and younger churches, notwithstanding their different cultural, religious and social backgrounds, and atmospheres, are virtually in the same position and dealing with a common situation.¹⁰

Observers of the discussion must ask themselves, though, whether the point was to effect or to surmount differentiation. The latter became necessary insofar as the factual and especially the potential power of the "secular gospels" came to be recognized in the discussion. Clearly H. Kraemer's eye for decisive factors — quite apart from his tendency toward simplification — saw rather sharply what is most telling in the contemporary situation and what stamps it at all levels. At least one thing was thereby achieved. The participants in the discussion held in Section II at Amsterdam did not make the embarrassing mistake of following the all-too-simple path of analysis according to the formula of *malus*, *peior*, and *pessimus*. Instead they were faced with an analysis which constrained them to work theologically. Only thus will the problem of differentiating the situation be fruitful.

Second only to H. Kraemer, the representatives of the churches in Asia and Africa considerably influenced the discussion. S. C. Neill reported that he had to rewrite some passages in the preparatory volume up to three times before they found approval with these representatives.¹¹ The passages emphasized that the churches in the West do not appraise the situation in their countries from the viewpoint of the Christian tradition, with which further reckoning is possible, but rather from the viewpoint of the deeply rooted secularism of the West, which has become determinative throughout the world.

¹⁰ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 15–16.

¹¹ Conversation of January 15, 1957.

As a result, the ecumenical element, which occupies a vital place for H. Kraemer, was conjoined with the foregoing. It is evident that the church's common task of proclamation is highly important for the church's unity. At this point both elements meet. The common task of proclamation must be urged all the more since the situation of the churches in East and West correspond in theological essentials, at least from the viewpoint of a church understood fundamentally in terms of witness. Here the events of Whitby (1947) and their aftermath are tending toward their logical conclusion.¹²

The representatives of the younger churches stressed above all the urgency of the evangelistic task. They held that there was no time for theoretical discussion of the problems of evangelism at length. They said, "The hour is at hand!" At Amsterdam this awareness of urgency which was derived from Whitby was so inexorably drummed into the hesitant men of the old Christianity by the younger churches that a kind of conflict of generations almost resulted between the older and younger churches.¹³

On the discussion at Amsterdam we have an interesting report from a member of Section II:

Through a motion on a point of order by Professor T. L. Haitjema of the Netherlands, the question of the relationship between these two tasks was posed at the beginning of the Section's work. Prof. Haitjema desired that a distinction be made in the deliberations between "internal" and "external" missions, i.e., between evangelism at home and abroad. The proposal was unanimously rejected and never again emerged in the subsequent proceedings. From the beginning, then, clarity was achieved on an important point. From now on the evangelistic activity of the church in the so-called Christian countries is no longer to be separated from the proclamation of the gospel among the so-called non-Christian peoples.¹⁴

¹² Cf. *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World*, ed. C. W. Ranson, pp. 206 ff., 173 ff., 214 ff.

¹³ E. Kellerhals, "Die Entstehung des Amsterdamer Berichts ueber Mission und Evangelisation," *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin*, XCIII (1949), 186.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

This report is suggestive of a trend which was present at the start of the discussion in the sections committee and was characteristic of Amsterdam as a whole. This trend grew out of the tension between the agitation of the postwar years and the fact of the World Council of Churches, which had now become a reality. On the one hand, the trend had its roots in a situation of collapse and upheaval; on the other, it was anchored in the hope that the co-operation of the churches and the strengthening of their powers would give promise of the possibility of a fresh beginning in a new and common effort. In an oral report M. Niemöller, the vice-chairman of Section II, conveyed as his strongest impression of the days at Amsterdam the realization of the enormous task of the churches in a world which had become enormous itself. H. P. van Dusen, in the General Introduction preceding each of the Amsterdam volumes, writes: "The World Council of Churches has come into being at a moment of peril for all mankind which is without precedent in the whole of human history." This is designated a "fateful moment,"¹⁵ in the light of which the main theme of the Assembly, "Man's Disorder and God's Design," may well have to be understood. In Section II this trend led to a formulation which reproduces in a sentence what had been alive in the Preparatory Commission and in the sections committee: "The present day is the beginning of a new epoch of missionary enterprise, calling for the pioneering spirit, and for the dedication of many lives to the service of the Gospel of God."¹⁶ The proclamation of the gospel, to which all theological and personal enthusiasm and confidence was devoted, was (in a biblically correct manner) vigorously defined "as the common task of all the churches."¹⁷ For the sake of the church as church and in the light of the situation encircling the churches, the vigor underlying the

¹⁵ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

definition boldly ignored theological reservations (baptism) and factors of church history (Christianization).

Probably very few members of the Section were fully aware of the theological consequences of this decision. It appears that most took into consideration only the practical viewpoints, but not the conclusions which later arose for the self-understanding of the church. This can be inferred from the fact that the Amsterdam decision on the relation of missions and evangelism has not yet yielded fruit as a question posed to the churches and has never even been discussed in a theologically binding manner.

Continuing the tendency which began at Tambaram, the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Wiltingen (1952) accepted the Amsterdam decision concerning the theological unity of missions and evangelism. In the program of study for the meeting, one of the aims is described as follows:

To define afresh the missionary task of the older and younger churches in terms which take into account . . . (c) the scale and urgency of the evangelistic task in the lands of the older churches themselves . . .¹⁸

In the reports of the conference "foreign missions" are regarded as a decisive part, but only as one part of the "total missionary obligation of the church." The intention was first of all to assert that missionary work is not only the affair and task of missionary agencies or of the churches in the West which conduct missionary enterprises: ". . . the Church's mission is deeper and more far-reaching than can be expressed through the historic agencies of the foreign missionary movement."¹⁹ This statement has a broader background, though, in the conception of a worldwide missionary task in which a

¹⁸ N. Goodall, "First Principles," 257.

¹⁹ *The Missionary Obligation of the Church* (London: Edinburgh House Pr., 1952), Vol. V.

“supposed line between the ‘Christian West’ and the ‘non-Christian East’ ”²⁰ is rejected as the boundary of evangelism.

The Amsterdam decision was presupposed in the preparations and work of Section II at Evanston, and was no longer part of the discussion. But the significance of Evanston for viewing missions and evangelism together is obvious. Through the main theme and the work of J. C. Hoekendijk, it first became generally clear at Evanston in what way the Amsterdam decision was of great theological consequence. In the eschatological view “missions” no longer continue to be propagation of Christendom and “evangelization” merely a matter of rousing and recalling those who have defected from the church community and its beliefs. On the contrary, missionary proclamation (evangelism) is now commonly conceived—I should say—with comprehensive and increasing depth. It is now understood as the gathering of the congregation with a view to the end—a gathering which is required in the (strictly speaking) de-Christianized situation of the West even as it is required in the situation of the East with its surfeit of religion. As missionary proclamation (evangelism) “evangelization” is now awarded its eschatological office. The Amsterdam decision was therefore completed at Evanston. It is almost possible to say that had Amsterdam not arrived at this decision, Evanston would have had to effect it.

THE DECLARATION OF ROLLE (MISSION AND UNITY)

At Rolle (1951) the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches adopted a basic declaration entitled “The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity.”²¹ This declaration on the question of missions and unity was not the first but probably the most important one made on the part of the World Council with respect to the International Missionary Council. It was preceded by reports which the

²⁰ *Missions under the Cross*, ed. Norman Goodall, p. 191.

²¹ *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), pp. 66 ff.

Joint Committee had been publishing since its appointment in 1938-39. Of these reports the most important was the one on the establishment of the World Council. It insured the famed "in association with" which both councils added to their names. Finally, a number of articles have been written on the discussion. They deal especially with the work of the International Missionary Council and, primarily in relation to its conferences, with a question which had suggested from the beginning the close interdependence and even inseparability of missions and unity.²² The declaration of Rolle was an attempt to combine these preliminary efforts. It aimed at corroborating the inseparability of unity and missions of the church, and raised the question as to the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council.

At Willingen a year later, the International Missionary Council published a statement bearing the same title. This it did especially with its member councils in mind. Theologically the Willingen statement ratified the Rolle declaration, but left the question of the organizational integration of the two councils open.

Shortly before Willingen, the Joint Committee, referring to the Rolle declaration, circulated a letter among the International Missionary Council, the Commission on Faith and Order in the World Council, the Advisory Commission for the Main Theme of the Second Assembly, and the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. In this letter the question was raised again and formulated more precisely on the basis of the Rolle declaration:

The problem on which we all need more light is this: it is clear in the New Testament that the Church is called at the same time to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world and to manifest in and to that world the fellowship and unity which is in Christ. These two aspects of the calling

²² W. W. Cash, *The Missionary Church* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1939). E. H. Wahlstrom, *My Father Worketh Hitherto* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1945).

of the Church are interdependent. But in our theological thinking and in the life of our Churches these two callings have often been separated, so that some tend to emphasize the first and some the second. In our time, through the growth of younger churches, through a rediscovery of our evangelistic task in many countries and through the ecumenical movement, the Spirit makes us aware of the great need to grasp and clarify the essential connexion between the missionary function of the Church (its apostolate) and its obligation to be one (its catholicity). Can we articulate clearly how these two are related to each other; and can we express in the life of our own congregations, our churches and our ecumenical movements this fundamental unity?²³

Shortly afterwards, the theme played no slight role at Lund. In the constitution proposed for the Commission on Faith and Order in the World Council the first task of the Commission was formulated as follows: "To proclaim the essential oneness of the Church of Christ and to keep prominently before the World Council and the Churches the obligation to manifest that unity."²⁴ The conference added a supplement which clearly shows the way in which the questions of missions were linked with those of unity in the World Council. The conference decided to adopt the following addendum: "... and its urgency for the work of evangelism . . ."²⁵ Correspondingly, the words, "... and its call to unity . . ."²⁶ were added to the first task of the Department on Evangelism (at Evanston), i.e., "to keep prominently before the World Council . . . and its member churches their evangelistic and missionary obligation."

A half year later the question of missions and unity played a vital role at the Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia, organized by the World Council at Lucknow, India

²³ *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting and the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Willingen, Germany, July 5th to 21st, 1952* (London, 1952), pp. 34–35. Likewise, *Minutes and Reports of the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Lucknow, India, Dec. 31, 1952–Jan. 8, 1953* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, n.d.), p. 123.

²⁴ *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, August 15–28, 1952*, ed. O. S. Tomkins, pp. 359–60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954*, pp. 201, 202.

(1952). "Mission and Unity" were designated "the two poles of the Ecumenical Movement." Above all, the discussion was focused on grasping the question of missions and unity as a question for the churches in East Asia and sought to supply an answer as to whether those churches were or should be involved in evangelism and if so, how. The conference also attempted to deal with the consequences to which the *skandalon* of schism might lead in evangelism and explicitly asked for the speedy integration of the two councils as a visible expression of common purpose among the churches throughout the world.²⁷

Subsequently the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches met in Lucknow.²⁸ Among the three main themes of the meeting one was related to the Rolle declaration: "The Two Primary Goals of the Ecumenical Movement — Mission and Unity." This was the primary theme, on which D. T. Niles delivered a paper addressed especially to the Western representatives:

The mission of the Church is to be a holy nation, a pilgrim people, a royal priesthood. . . . It is a pilgrim people whose life is lived between the Red Sea and the land of promise. These people can never settle down. . . . Unity is never strategy for the sake of mission. It is part of the mission itself.²⁹

Another of the main themes was "The Asian Situation as a Concern of Christians Everywhere."³⁰ In its very formulation this theme clearly indicates the significance of the fact that the Central Committee was meeting in Asia for the first time. The chairman of the central Committee at that time, G. K. A. Bell, judged this to be a "historic event" and, with

²⁷ Christ—*The Hope of Asia: Papers and Minutes of the Ecumenical Study Conference for East Asia. Lucknow, India, December 27–30, 1952*, p. 25. Cf. R. B. Manikam, "Some Concerns of Younger Churchmen," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1953), 291.

²⁸ *Fifth Meeting . . . Central Committee . . . Lucknow*.

²⁹ D. T. Niles, "The Church's Call to Mission and Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, V (1952), 244–47. Cf. the exceptionally interesting debate on Niles' address: *Fifth Meeting . . . Central Committee . . . Lucknow*, p. 10.

³⁰ *Fifth Meeting . . . Central Committee . . . Lucknow*, pp. 16 ff.

regard to the conferences which the International Missionary Council had already held in Asia, emphatically declared that the task of the churches in Asia (and in Africa) would now be seen and grasped within "the field of the two ecumenical movements, which joined their forces in the World Council of Churches: Faith and Order and Life and Work."³¹ G. K. A. Bell's address is revealing in two respects for the question of missions and unity in the World Council, and particularly for the wing he represents. First, the strength of his address is found in its comprehension of the reality of the churches in Asia, as seen from India, and in its presentation of the political and social problems of the Continent, with which the address chiefly concerns itself. Second, the conspicuous weakness of the address lies in its consideration of the reality and necessity of the missionary enterprise. The letter of the Central Committee to the member churches of the Council³² also demonstrates, even if not so obviously, the same weakness. After the "Imperative of Social Justice" and the "Christian Basis of Political Freedom" have been referred to, the "Call to Missionary Obedience and Unity" is finally mentioned, as if it were the concluding point. But the core of the question of missions and unity lies at this very point in the discussion within the World Council. This focal point has been recognized as such; it underlies the Rolle declaration and the conversations which took place after Rolle. The churches which have assembled in the World Council for co-operation and debate on the question of the church's unity have exerted themselves genuinely, but inconclusively. They have pointed out that the churches cannot remain isolated individually or as a group but have to carry the message given them into the world and that in such action ecumenical thought and, finally, even unity, the objec-

³¹ G. K. A. Bell, "Opening Address," *Fifth Meeting . . . Central Committee . . . Lucknow*, pp. 6 ff. Also in *Ecumenical Review*, V (1952), 229-32.

³² "Letter to the Member Churches," *Fifth Meeting . . . Central Committee . . . Lucknow*, pp. 96 ff. Also in *Ecumenical Review*, V (1952), 283-85.

tive of their meeting, are realized. All this, though, is largely wooing for obedience to evangelism especially in Asia and Africa. A resolution of the question has been indicated, but not attained.

If the problem of the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council is kept in mind, then similar difficulties are seen to have been present following Evanston, where considerable progress was made on the question as to missions and unity. The problem of integration reflects in detail the state of the discussion on missions and unity.

The meeting of the Central Committee at Yale, New Haven (1957), repeated the question in the formulation of its main theme, "The Calling of the Church to Witness and to Serve." The two papers of H. Berkhof and R. Chandran, which were devoted to fundamental theological work, were not indicative of the difficulties in store for the meeting, but the practical problem of mobilizing the churches was. W. A. Visser 't Hooft dealt with this problem in his report:

It has been asked from where the pressure comes for the integration of the two world bodies. The main answer must be: from the heart of the ecumenical movement itself! As a leader of a younger church in Asia said the other day: "If the WCC does not take mission seriously it is not worthy of its name." We owe it to the younger churches which join the Council to provide for them an ecumenical milieu in which the missionary calling pervades the whole atmosphere. We owe it to the older churches to maintain in our whole life the pressure of that greatest of all callings. And the WCC as a whole needs the experience and insights of the historic missionary movement.³³

As was sensed at the World Missionary Conference at Ghana, the enterprise now under consideration not only has practical consequences, but also suggests a condition for genuinely ecumenical thinking. And ecumenical thinking is precisely our concern.

³³ *Minutes and Reports of the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A., July 30-August 7, 1957, p. 84.*

IX

Results of the Discussion: Unity and Evangelism

Within the ecumenical discussion the question of the unity of the church is connected in two ways with that of evangelism (missionary proclamation). Unity is necessary for evangelism because Jesus Christ, who proclaims himself, is undivided and the witness of the divided church misrepresents him. Secondly, unity comes to pass *through* evangelism, in which Jesus Christ himself acts as one who is undivided. Such evangelism evokes a response of belief in him and offers hope of unity. In Jesus Christ unity is implicit; in his proclamation unity may be hoped for as his gift.

At this juncture the question of the interdependence of missions and evangelism arises. Unity means unity of significant measure in gathering toward the future of Christ.

I. UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND EVANGELISM

When the question of the church's unity is curtailed in such a way that it refers merely to a static aggregation of churches which refuse to risk themselves, then this question is reduced simply to one of collaboration. The question of the church's unity derives its meaning from the question of evangelism, the eschatological character of evangelism and its eschatological promise. The Lord, who gives the church unity, is the coming Lord. This theological position provides tension between "ecumenical" and "missionary" in that the essential nature of "ecumenical" can be truly grasped and activated only from the viewpoint of "missionary."

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "ECUMENICAL"

"Ecumenical"¹ involves two elements: evangelism and the unity of the churches.

The element of evangelism

According to W. A. Visser 't Hooft, when the most important biblical passages on the concept of *oikoumene* are assembled, two components of the concept emerge. Of these, the geographical component is primary and comprehensive. The political component is restricted in application and secondary. In its geographical sense, *oikoumene* means the earth and world, the land given men to live upon, the earthly sphere occupied by them. In its political sense, which is not its ordinary sense, *oikoumene* designates the empire of eastern and especially Roman form which is culturally and politically integrated. The geographical meaning is the predominant and determinative one:

On the whole the Oikoumene is simply conceived as the field of activity of the Church. . . . The Oikoumene is the space in which the Church moves and which it claims for its Lord, who — according to the Epistle to the Hebrews — is brought into the Oikoumene as the first begotten (Heb. 1:6), and who is therefore its legitimate Ruler.²

The Ecumenical Missionary Conference held in New York in 1900 explained that it used this designation ["Ecumenical"] "because the plan of campaign which it proposes covers the whole area of the inhabited earth."³

¹ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Meaning of 'Ecumenical'* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1953). W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Word 'Ecumenical'—Its History and Use," in R. Rouse and S. C. Neill, *History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Philadelphia: Westminster Pr., 1954), pp. 735–40. Cf. J. T. McNeill, "The Ecumenical Testimony in Christian History," *Christendom*, XI (1946), 303–15. J. A. MacKay, "Ecumenical: The Word and the Concept," *Theology Today*, IX (1952), 1–9.

² Visser 't Hooft, *The Meaning of 'Ecumenical'*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22. Cf. *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900*. Two volumes. (New York: American Tract Society, 1900).

Here "ecumenical" is related to the world as the "room of witness,"⁴ which the church must cover "as a testimony to all nations." (Matt. 24:14).

The element of the churches' unity

The meaning attached to *oikoumene* in the course of early and medieval church history is marked by the fact that the gospel was preached within the *oikoumene* and that the church grew in the *oikoumene* as the fruit of such preaching. The *oikoumene* [the Mediterranean area] is the "new Oikoumene" filled with the gospel, the "area of which Christ has as it were already taken possession. That Oikoumene is no longer the purely secular world. Its life is qualified and conditioned by the presence of the Gospel." The bearer of this "new Oikoumene" is the church. According to W. A. Visser 't Hooft, Basil the Great "actually identified the Oikoumene and the church." To put it another way, the preaching and hearing of the gospel created a new fact. Against this background "ecumenical" means, in terms of dogmatics and jurisdiction, "pertaining to or representing the Church as a whole" and "having universal ecclesiastical validity."⁵

Later, in view of the church's division, the meaning altered. "Ecumenical" then came to designate "the relations between several churches or between Christians of different confessions."⁶ In that sense the word is initially applied to the ecumenical movement. W. A. Visser 't Hooft correctly states that here "ecumenical" occurs "in the sense of a subjective attitude rather than an objective fact."⁷ The aim is mutual understanding and strengthening of the consciousness of belonging together above and beyond confessional and especially national boundaries.

⁴ H. W. Gensichen, *The Elements of Ecumenism* (Madras, 1954), p. 1.

⁵ Visser 't Hooft, *Meaning of 'Ecumenical,'* pp. 11, 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

This sense of "ecumenical" was conclusively deepened by N. Söderblom; it gradually assumed the meaning it essentially possesses today in the ecumenical movement.

For him the word contains far more than the connotation of universal representation. He pours into it the whole content of his conviction concerning the basic unity of the Christian Church and its common task in the world.

["Ecumenical"] expresses the reality of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.⁸

Here the unity which has been given the church constitutes the foundation of the unity which the church has abandoned. This thought was expounded at Oxford in 1937:

The term ecumenical refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the Church. The thought and action of the Church are ecumenical, in so far as they attempt to realize the *Una Sancta*, the fellowship of Christians, who acknowledge the one Lord.⁹

Belief in the unity of the church in Jesus Christ and, growing out of this belief, the actualization of unity among the churches are "ecumenical" in the foregoing sense.

"Ecumenical" and "missionary"

The elements of evangelism and church unity are brought into dynamic relationship in determining the conception of "ecumenical." These two elements interpenetrate one another. W. A. Visser 't Hooft describes a passage in the writings of Basil the Great in connection with an inquiry into the unity of *oikoumene* and church:

In a very curious passage of his commentary on the Psalms . . . he points out that the *ethne* are those who are strangers to the faith and that the inhabitants of the Oikoumene are "those who are in the Church." He adds that the *ethne* . . . are mentioned first because they need the Gospel more. And he urges the Christians not to look down upon the pagans: "the inhabitants of the Oikoumene should receive

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹ Cited in Visser 't Hooft, *Meaning of 'Ecumenical,'* p. 26.

with love those who are strangers to the covenant." It is surely noteworthy that, when the term Oikoumene is first used for the Christian Church itself, it is accompanied by the warning . . . that ecumenical concern is sterile without evangelistic and missionary concern.¹⁰

W. A. Visser 't Hooft concludes his examination of the word, "ecumenical," with these words:

Finally we should never allow the word ecumenical to be used in an inverted manner. It must not be isolated from the missionary and evangelistic context in which it belongs. The Christian Oikoumene has only the right to call itself by that name if it remembers that it exists to be the salt of the earth, that is to represent "the coming Oikoumene" in the midst of the Oikoumene which is the whole inhabited earth.¹¹

It is understandable that these reflections issue from the existence of the World Council of *Churches* and that the definition of the conception of "ecumenical" is therefore marked by the element of church unity. It is important to take note of this because the point of departure in understanding "ecumenical" prejudices is the outcome of the statement and because here an example is given of a current understanding in the ecumenical discussion. If the conception of "ecumenical" is defined strictly with reference to existing *churches*, their coming together and their supposed and expected unity, then the missionary element is stunted. It would of course also appear then, but only as an appendage, so to speak, "simply by noting that 'mission work must be done.'" ¹² J. C. Hoekendijk was thinking of this danger as lurking in the World Council and particularly in the Commission on Faith and Order¹³ when he (before Evanston) strongly emphasized the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹² W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), p. 404.

¹³ Cf. the reports of Section I at Amsterdam and Evanston, especially the perplexity on the question of mission and unity. Also cf. W. Freytag, "Impressions of the Evanston Assembly," *Ecumenical Review*, VII (1954), p. 12. C. T. Leber, "Evanston and the Ecumenical Mission," *Ecumenical Review*, VI (1954), 373, asked before Evanston that Section I consider the question of unity in a missionary context: "What we are pleading for is . . . that a sense of the Church's mission to the world should animate the entire assembly." In this plea as at many other points the displeasure at the meager insight into evangelism of numerous churches and their representatives in the World Council comes to the surface.

New Testament understanding, viz., that in the *oikoumene* it is not primarily a matter of the unity of the churches, but rather of "the whole Church bringing the Gospel to the whole world." The missionary element is dominant in this approach. The actual condition of the churches and their history is, for polemical purposes, simply disregarded. "Ecumenical" is exclusively and totally "missionary." The ecumenical movement must be radically a missionary movement.

In the Rolle declaration an attempt was made to balance the tension between these two elements by putting them on the same level:

[“Ecumenical”] therefore covers equally the missionary movement and the movement towards unity, and must not be used to describe the latter in contradistinction to the former. We believe that a real service will be rendered to true thinking on these subjects in the Churches if we so use this word that it covers both Unity and Mission in the context of the whole world. Both I.M.C. and the W.C.C. are thus properly to be described as organs of the Ecumenical Movement.¹⁴

In the Rolle declaration the identification is christologically grounded. Through the cross of Christ Christians are reconciled with God and one another and are "built . . . together to be a habitation of God in the Spirit." God has "at the same time made us His ambassadors."¹⁵ Similarly J. A. Mackay evaluates and consequently defines the ecumenical movement as a "double movement towards the Christian occupation of the *oikoumene* and towards the pursuit of unity among Christians within the *oikoumene*."¹⁶

Does the identification hold true? Has not an ecclesiological point of departure been once more applied here? Is it not the case that on the basis of this point of departure a co-ordination of the two elements is sought and then so dealt

¹⁴ "The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity," in *Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee, Rolle (Switzerland), August 4-11, 1951*, p. 68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Mackay, "New Frontiers in the Life of the Church," *Theology Today*, XI (1954), 256.

with in practice that evangelism amounts to church unity which is accepted as "ecumenical" and introduced as such? Does it not sound as if the missionary movement is therefore to be justified as ecumenical? Are both elements after all commensurable in this manner?¹⁷

"Missionary" and "ecumenical"

W. Freytag criticized the Rolle statement and, in doing so, criticized a wide current within the ecumenical discussion. On the christological foundation he remarks "that the biblical basis obviously does not suffice actually to carry the noteworthy consequences which are drawn for church and missions from a biblical basis."¹⁸ His attention is directed particularly toward a note in the Rolle declaration, which reads:

Of course we are united with regard to Christ's victory at the end, but not with regard to its manner or kind; nor are we united with regard to that for which we may rightly hope in history.¹⁹

¹⁷ K. Bridston, Secretary of the Department on Faith and Order, has written an article, "Is Ecumenism a Hindrance to Evangelism?" *Student World*, L (1957), 347-60, which is designed to be "merely provocative" and proves to be most illuminating on this basis. He sharply attacks the "present-day ecumenical ideology . . . that mission and unity are one" (347). For him there exists between the two elements an absolutely necessary and insurmountable tension about which the Ecumenical Movement is still not clear, or does not want to be: "The ecumenical movement itself . . . is an uneasy compromise between its original missionary foundations and its later ecclesiastical evolution." (349). "Ecumenism . . . is hindrance" to evangelism in three ways: as "distraction" from the missionary task; as "deterrent" in the sense, e.g., that ecumenical self-awareness among the churches in Asia and Africa makes the free development of missions difficult or even impossible; as "delusion that unity guarantees evangelism" (359). "And so they stay together—to do nothing. Evangelism is sacrificed on the altar of ecumenism." (354). Bridston therefore recommends "that the ecumenical community should not be one which is striving to synthesize mission and unity, but one which recognizes the inevitable dialectic tension between mission and unity and expresses that tension in life and action" (360).

¹⁸ W. Freytag, "Der Beruf der Kirche zu Mission und Einheit," *Evangelische Missionszeitschrift*, VIII (1951), 183-85.

¹⁹ H. Grueber and G. Brennecke, *Christus—die Hoffnung der Welt* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1954), p. 165.

W. Freytag comments:

This note shows that the eschatological statements of the argument have merely remained citations. In actuality clarity is lacking as to how these statements are meaningfully related to the matter under discussion.²⁰

In default of the eschatological view as the presupposition for the proper co-ordination of missions and unity, these two fail of theological differentiation and are subject to identification "as if they lay on the same plane, the Church's unity, which is given in the nature of the Church, and the mandate for missions, which is placed upon the Church."

The adduced biblical statements are therefore unavoidably misapplied. The biblical basis therefore offers instruction neither for relating the churches as they are to *one* Church nor for distinguishing genuine missions from such propagation of the churches as constitutes merely a repetition of themselves.²¹

This criticism means that the relationship of missions and unity from an eschatological aspect, as elaborated at Willingen and Evanston, must be determined anew.

In this respect W. Freytag mentioned two fundamental points. The unity we seek is given in Jesus Christ and rests solely in him; it shines forth through participation in him and in his work between the "already" and the "not yet." Secondly, such participation becomes concrete in obedience vis-à-vis the mission of proclaiming the gospel for the gathering of the people of God toward the end, which harbors the unity of the people of God. Church, unity, and evangelism are conceived strictly eschatologically.

In particular, this means, first of all, that the view in which the churches are labeled "earthen vessels"²² is averted. In

²⁰ W. Freytag, "Der Beruf der Kirche zu Mission und Einheit," *op. cit.*, p. 185.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, p. 410.

other words, "ecumenical" cannot be defined in terms of the churches as they are and their endeavors at union. "Ecumenical" is — and this deepens understanding of the given unity — an eschatological conception.²³ The resulting view of missions and unity is therefore open to Christ's work in the world and to his goal. If thinking is to be ecumenical, it must be thinking on the basis and strength of this goal. Faith now comes to know, W. Freytag continues, that behind all the historical configurations of the churches and all the motives of missionary enterprises the one, undivided Lord works. We must always look to him and hope in him, above all when the question of missions and unity arises and therefore the question of the church as eschatological reality. He is the one who "brings forth one and the same fruit" from the efforts of various churches and missionary enterprises.²⁴

The unity of the church as "something coming into being here and now"²⁵ is tied to participation in the work of Christ, i.e., to the preaching and ministry of the gospel; and the gospel, by virtue of its *dunamis*, spreads among the nations, from which God's people must be gathered for unity with Christ. This unity beams forth in evangelism! It appears wherever the churches advance beyond themselves, not in order to seek their own propagation by Christianizing the world, which is the corroboration of an institutionalized church, but rather in order to proclaim Jesus Christ as He who is coming again (and who is therefore proclaimed for his own sake). This proclamation is a "step towards something new"; by its very execution it makes the distinctive elements of individual churches unimportant. In summary W. Freytag writes: "It is only the churches which accept to go forth on mission who progress toward the achievement of

²³ Cf. Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the Second Assembly, ¶¶ 47, 50.

²⁴ W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, p. 406.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

unity.”²⁶ “Ecumenical” can therefore be understood only in a missionary context (so viewed, J. C. Hoekendijk is right). What was no more than a formal statement in the Rolle declaration is now to be similarly understood. “Ecumenical” is the name for everything “that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world”²⁷ “in order that the world may believe”²⁸ “wholly in terms of the one indivisible cause of the kingdom.”²⁹ Herein lies the answer to the question which the Joint Committee formulated following the Rolle declaration: “What does the Christian Hope . . . imply for our attitude to and expectation concerning the realization of Christian unity in history?”³⁰

UNITY THROUGH EVANGELISM

The line needs only to be extended from this definition of the conception of “ecumenical.” Renewal (towards unity) can be expected only in evangelism which participates in the gathering of the one people of God through the one Lord. M. A. C. Warren writes: “It is no accident that it is where the Faith advances on the frontiers that the Body of Christ is most visibly becoming one.”³¹ At Ghana, in the sharp

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 408-09; likewise, among many others, W. Nicholls, “The Ecumenical Movement and the Doctrine of the Church,” *Ecumenical Review*, IV (1951), p. 24. From this aspect H. P. van Dusen, “Christian Missions and Unity,” in *Basileia*, ed. J. Hermelink and H. J. Margull, pp. 489-501, has described particular stages on the path to unity.

²⁷ The formulation had been devised as early as the preparations for Oxford (1937). “The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity,” in *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee, Rolle (Switzerland), August 4-11, 1951*, p. 68.

²⁸ Visser 't Hooft in *Minutes and Reports of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee, Toronto, Canada, July 9-15, 1950*, p. 72.

²⁹ Visser 't Hooft in *Minutes and Reports of the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn. (USA), July 30-August 7, 1957*, p. 85.

³⁰ *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting and the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Willingen, Germany, July 5th to 21st, 1952*, p. 35.

³¹ M. A. C. Warren, “The Missionary Obligation of the Church in the Present Historical Situation with Consideration of the Radical New Relationship between East and West,” *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 400.

debate on the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council, he repeated: "Only in the pursuit of mission are we going to be led into the meaning of unity."³² This means that only through the proclamation of the eschatological Lord to the ends of the earth can the unity of the church be eschatologically understood. H. Kraemer is thinking in the same direction when he stresses the openness of the goal, which must be eschatologically emphasized to the utmost, and writes:

It would mean a spiritual catastrophe if . . . the World Council of Churches in fact became mainly the organized effort for reunion and mobilization of the separated Churches, thereby forgetting its true inspiration, that is to say, being an Abrahamic adventure of faith toward a still unknown country, which God will show to us.³³

EVANGELISM IN UNITY (ONENESS)

The promise of unity which is given evangelism in its aiming toward the end stimulates the churches (and missionary enterprises) to the task of co-operative venture in evangelism. On the basis of the promise, therefore, there is theological justification and command for what would otherwise be all too readily understood from the viewpoint of utility and effectiveness. In fact, such improper misunderstanding often occurs from this viewpoint, which is of course successful practically, but which is theologically illegitimate and is in the long run unfruitful. Only if a stance is taken in hope of a unity which is first and foremost sought for the sake of Christ alone can unity, as here and now presented, be grasped in a correct — and blessed — manner (oneness). Such hope is active hope. Whoever hopes for unity must be an active agent of unity. W. A. Visser 't Hooft outlines the task of the ecumenical movement when he states: "The people of God is gathered together in order that it may serve as an instru-

³² *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, Ghana, Dec. 28, 1957–Jan. 8, 1958*, p. 131.

³³ H. Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 10.

ment to gather the scattered children of God in the whole world."³⁴ W. Freytag thinks of the concrete reality of the proclamation, which is expressed by the thought that "their witness achieves its full strength only in unity."³⁵

These statements (among many others) grapple with the widespread dissension which the ecumenical movement was formed to oppose and which to the present day encumbers the ecumenical movement in spite of the measure of oneness already achieved. At Whitby, J. Baillie described this dissension as the "principal stumbling block" and as a "millstone round our necks," referring not only to denominational, but also to national, racial, party, and class divisions,³⁶ which are now making themselves felt in Europe also. At Willingen the situation with its restrictive effect on evangelism was described as follows:

Division in the Church distorts its witness, frustrates its mission, and contradicts its own nature. If the Church is to demonstrate the Gospel in its life as well as in its preaching, it must manifest to the world the power of God to break down all barriers and to establish the Church's unity in Christ. Christ is not divided.³⁷

In this connection the question arises regarding the progressive co-operation, not only of splintered individual forces, but also of the churches themselves in evangelism, probably above all in America, but also in Europe. In the Report of Section II at Amsterdam it is surmised in imperative tones that "the churches may find a denominational framework too narrow for their work today"³⁸ if they devote themselves wholly to the task immediately before them. As a result of Evanston the following formulation was adopted:

³⁴ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Various Meanings of Unity and the Unity which the W.C.C. Seeks to Promote," *Ecumenical Review*, VIII (1955), 27.

³⁵ W. Freytag, "Mission and Unity," *op. cit.*, p. 412.

³⁶ J. Baillie, "The Unity of Mankind," in *Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World*, ed. C. W. Ranson, pp. 17 ff.

³⁷ N. Goodall (ed.), *Missions under the Cross*, p. 193; cf. H. Kraemer, "The Formation of the World Council and its Significance for the Relation of the Churches," ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 46.

³⁸ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 216.

To stop short of united evangelism is to countenance the conclusion that Christians do not experience a unity in Christ strong enough to enable them to join in bringing Christ to men and women and men and women to Christ. To effect an entry through the countless doors at present barred to Christianity is a task of too great magnitude for anything less than a united approach.³⁹

The elaborations undertaken on the question of missionary action make clear the necessity of emancipation from denominational attitudes. Hereafter the method and kind of work undertaken cannot avoid moving in this direction.

2. UNITY OF MISSIONS AND HOME MISSIONS IN MISSIONARY PROCLAMATION (EVANGELISM)

The important question of the theological understanding of "ecumenical" leads to a point which has already been alluded to several times. It is now necessary to set forth definitively from what aspects and with what arguments missions and home missions are theologically regarded as a unit in the ecumenical discussion and designated, both of them, as missionary proclamation (evangelism) without careless abridgment of the genuinely missionary element — which is of decisive value. At the same time the elaboration of this question will serve to define the conception of evangelism.

Sufficient attention has already been given to the difficult theological problem involved in the question. We must regard the ecumenical decision from the standpoint of the question whether the decision can be made theologically comprehensible while retaining both the full relevance of the conception of *metanoia* and the criterion of baptism.

In order to eliminate immediately one possible misunderstanding of the ecumenical discussion, the following passage is cited:

³⁹ *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, p. 46.

We are called to deal with two classes of persons, to whose status the New Testament directs no attention—infants baptized but not as yet able to make that response of personal faith without which membership of the Church cannot reach its fulness; and those who though baptized are content with such a remote and rudimentary allegiance to the Gospel that it is difficult to apply to them the glowing terms in which the early Church spoke of the relationship of the redeemed man to God. In neither case are we called to deny the reality of membership in the Church which baptism conveys.⁴⁰

This fundamental declaration, however, is held in tension with another statement: "Membership in Him remains unreal, until it is tested by willingness to accept membership in His visible body in all its division and weakness and unattractiveness."⁴¹ This is the tension which is embodied in baptism and which, in the baptismal praxis of churches after the first generation, forms with rather painful clarity the problem of their effective existence.

It would not correspond to the inner trend of the ecumenical discussion, nor would it be theologically legitimate if, solely with regard to the question of assessing the new element of confrontation, one were to assert that this new confrontation forces the churches to genuine missionary activity. On the question of missionary situation and action it is a temptation to give preference to situation over church in the close, reciprocal relationship between the two. Just as this temptation has to be avoided, likewise strict attention must be given to the standpoint from which the Amsterdam decision is to be understood. Historically, it is already clear that the question of the interdependence (unity) of missions and home missions was raised by the most greatly varied churches, convening at Amsterdam from every continent. The approach must therefore be from the ecumenical side of the problem. Only then may the question be considered with which the discussion is faced on the basis of the new confrontation. Obviously, each side greatly restricts the other.

⁴⁰ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 117 (Neill).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

THE ONE TASK OF THE ONE CHURCH IN THE ONE WORLD

The existence of churches in Asia and Africa prescribes for the World Council this dynamic reminder: "The Church is a world-wide fact set in the midst of world-wide problems."⁴² This involves the question of the self-understanding of the churches in Europe, America, and Australia as confronted by their environment. Such self-understanding must occur from the viewpoint of their relation to the entire world and ultimately to their unity. They are united in the task which, through the existence of churches in Asia and Africa as churches (and not as congregations of missionary societies), devolves also upon other churches in the ecumenical union.

The one church

The passionate interest of the Asian and African churches in the *oikoumene*, whatever its grounds, is oriented, in one of its spiritually decisive factors, towards evangelism on the part of the entire church.

Our main concern is to see that the missionary emphasis becomes central to the life of the churches represented within the World Council. . . . It is through the World Council of Churches that the missionary movement can become the concern of the whole Church. . . . It is through the World Council that the world-wide mission of the Church proclaimed at Tambaram can become a reality.⁴³

W. A. Visser 't Hooft reports of the churches in Asia:

There lives in these Churches a deep and genuine conviction that the Church's very existence depends upon its readiness to evangelise. And that is then the boomerang which returns from the daughter-Churches to the mother-Churches—the insistent question whether the Western Churches, who have exported a dynamic, evangelistic conception of the Church, can recapture that conception for themselves.⁴⁴

⁴² C. Devanesean, "Post-Amsterdam Thoughts from a Younger Church," *Ecumenical Review*, I (1949), 143.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 148–49; cf. *The Evanston Report*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Asian Churches," *Ecumenical Review*, II (1950), 236–37.

It is the wish of the churches in Asia and Africa, even if trivially qualified at many points, to be understood primarily in this context and to drop the name, "young church," which only hardens the distinction between sending and receiving churches, in expressing their common task as churches.

The following sharp observation of S. Chakkoh reflects a genuine anxiety growing from the joint responsibility which, as the spiritual fruit of the [missionary] "Ut omnes unum sint," devolves on the debilitated churches of the West:

As a matter of fact there are large masses of people outside the Church who would not normally come to the Church seeking *life*, for they have ceased to regard the Church as a source of succour and help. They are just as pagan as the people in far-off lands to whom the Gospel never has been preached. . . . All of us, in whichever continent of the world we may be, . . . need to recognize that the Christian frontier is no longer to be geographically defined, that all lands need to have the Gospel preached to them, that the resources of the Church wherever they may exist and whatever they may be, ought to be considered as the common resources of the Church of Christ in the world, and used as such. Thus, all Churches, in so far as their material and spiritual resources are concerned, ought to be both sending and receiving Churches. It is in this mutuality that the word of God can most effectively bring healing and health to this troubled age.⁴⁵

The united action of the churches consists in joint *metanoia!*

For the World Council H. Kraemer more than anyone else has given expression to this trend, which has been stirring within the international missionary movement since its beginning and which reached maturity at Tambaram. As a matter of fact, H. Kraemer's position of leadership in the Amsterdam discussion rests largely upon the appearance and development of this trend. Because the world is created by God and the churches are "represented all over the world," H. Kraemer sees evangelism as the "world task" of the churches in a way "that the whole Church is responsible for

⁴⁵ S. Chakkoh, "Reflections on Recent Travels in Europe and North America," *Ecumenical Review*, III (1951), 150.

the whole world.”⁴⁶ The results of this view appear in the basic statement that the churches “must deal with every situation in the light of the total task.”⁴⁷

If this statement is not taken as a thesis, but is drawn apodictically from the *oikoumene* which is of and from Christ, it precludes the self-isolation of the home missionary activity of a church from the total task with theological justification. This basic statement also points up the heart of the matter. God has granted the churches existence throughout the world; and, if in the light of their widespread existence there is any intention to treat evangelism theologically, it can *only* be done *ecumenically*. (The implication is that evangelism is of necessity and at its core eschatologically determined in the light of the total task.) The churches in Africa and Asia have contributed to this realization through their active relationship to the other churches.

Ecumenical thinking is that which not merely is aware of the revolution in the state of the Christian Church brought about by its spatial extension in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but also takes seriously the Gospel as that act of God which cannot be understood except as His proclamation of salvation for the whole world, and as that word of God which awaits, for its final interpretation, the contributions to be made by all the nations of the world as they are gathered into the one fellowship of the world-wide Church of Christ.⁴⁸

The church confronting the world

The experience of alienation from their environment which the churches in Asia and Africa have undergone as well as the fresh theological reflections following World War I have had a decisive effect on the ecumenical movement. They have renewed that emphasis on the church's “otherness,” which is implicit in the crucified, risen, and returning Jesus Christ and his forgiveness.

⁴⁶ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

H. Kraemer has radically stressed the *discontinuity* of the Christian message with all of man's religious knowledge⁴⁹ and provided a solid, eschatological foundation for the confrontation of the old and new eons.⁵⁰ In doing so, he has articulated what W. A. Visser 't Hooft has called the evangelical remoteness of the world. Awareness of this gap between church and world represents a radical departure from the nineteenth-century church and is being increasingly deepened within the ecumenical movement, especially through the existence of the churches in Asia and Africa. Particularly for H. Kraemer this remoteness is, taking his theological statement as a whole, the *abrogation of identity* in essentials between a church and its surroundings. Abrogation of authority occurs even when the surroundings have been created by the church, but have continued to expand of their own accord into an autonomous culture, society, tradition, or even religiosity. Then the pact is terminated between church and state, between the churches and the ideological conception of the *Corpus Christianum*, between missions and colonialism (the process of civilization), between the church and an (autonomous) "Christian" way of life. Paradoxically the kingdom is present, but the present is in tension "between the times." In these circumstances, as has already been seen, the *critical* relationship of the church to the world stands out, and especially and concretely so in the church's relationship to its immediate environment. The church is a stranger in this world; it is in pilgrimage. However gravely this insight into the critical relationship of church to world is shaped by the transformation of the proclamation of Christ into the propagation of culture through missions, however gravely this insight is shaped by the transformation of the church, which

⁴⁹ H. Kraemer, "Continuity and Discontinuity," in *The Authority of the Faith* ("The Madras Series," Vol. I), pp. 1 ff. Contested by E. D. Soper, *The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Pr., 1943), pp. 222 ff.; cf. F. W. Dillistone, *Revelation and Evangelism* (London: Lutterworth Pr., 1948), *passim*.

⁵⁰ Also in, e.g., M. A. C. Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, p. 138.

according to the New Testament lives in exile, into churches which have been secularized by presenting themselves solely as a characteristic of culture, one thing is certain: Through this insight into the critical relationship of church to world the possibility and actuality of the churches' secularization has become obvious. This fact has decisively affected the ecumenical discussion. As a result the churches in Asia and Africa are given increased strength in overcoming the problem of their environment; and, for the churches in Europe, America, and Australia, the theological possibility and necessity of escaping fusion with a society which drives them toward secularism are demonstrated, even if only indirectly at the first. At Evanston this view of church and world was adopted and given theological precision. In the ecumenical discussion on evangelism [missionary proclamation] above all, this view must be the subject of further consideration and work if the meaning of the world's confrontation by the church is to be understood.

In the critical relationship of the church to its environment *baptism* emerges from its entanglements in the popular church. Theologically baptism usually takes the form of a dogmatic problem, baptism and faith. This problem loses its importance before the question of the meaning baptism holds for the baptized in his relation to the *world*. Baptism is an eschatological seal. It designates the radical discontinuity of the individual as a member of participation, endowed through baptism, in the body of Christ, which is in but not of the world. S. C. Neill, from his experience in the Asian and African churches, writes: "It puts the individual beyond the possibility of compromise. He has died to the old in order to embrace the new."⁵¹ This fact makes it incumbent upon the churches in the West to revise their stand on baptism and to take it seriously with a view to its contrast with the world. Baptism is always baptism into the death of Jesus Christ unto

⁵¹ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 117.

resurrection. To summarize the Evanston statements, which unhappily fail to mention baptism, it is always into expectation of the coming Lord, to whose future kingdom baptism is the pledge. Whoever is baptized is baptized into Christ, away from the justice of man and toward the justification granted by God. Whoever is baptized is therefore removed from the simple fact of the world. The significance of baptism and the importance attributed to it in a pagan environment is evidenced by the abrupt change of attitude toward missions in non-Christian surroundings when the first baptism is performed. Baptism means a radical and total break and is experienced as such. Through a man's baptism *the world sees* that he has undergone a *change of authority*. He is sealed against the world.

This view of baptism implicitly involves the question of the meaning of baptism as it arises in the popular church or, on the whole, in the situation of a society influenced by the Christian tradition. In the second preparatory volume of Amsterdam the passage at which the question arises is marked by the difficulty of such a question. In fact, this is a question emerging from the situation of the first generation and passing into that of the second generation. But these situations are mutually applicable or comparable at all only to the extent that each is first ascertained and taken seriously in its own singularity. With regard to the situation of the church in the New Testament, S. C. Neill therefore writes:

It is true that there was a simplicity in the early days of the Church which it is difficult to recover to-day . . . we are compelled to allow for the blurring of New Testament simplicities which has come about in the centuries of the Church's life.⁵²

If this is done, the question will be limited in its legitimate historical connections, but not annulled.

⁵² *Ibid.*

In the ecumenical discussion the point is to make this tension fruitful, particularly with respect to the situation of the Western churches. In this task one notion in particular assumes a significant place for S. C. Neill. It is the disparity between the view of baptism in a pagan environment, not to say the obviousness of decision springing from it there, and a baptism which is not much more than convention; and also the disquieting question whether one can resign himself to accepting baptism as no longer requiring the witness of faith and commitment to discipleship. It is the question whether it is genuinely possible to speak of church membership for a person who fails to express his baptism in his life. Such failure must be attributed to the majority of those in the West who are baptized as well as to the circumspection enjoined with respect to such a judgment. More concretely, does this sort of baptism guarantee the "being in Christ" (in the biblical sense) to which it is possible to refer in a pastoral context? Or is it, for the mass of those who are baptized, rather a matter of men who, living in the Christian community and therefore baptized for the most part, require not only continuous instruction and edification but also require first and foremost the missionary proclamation (evangelism) of the gospel as a call to turn, a call to make a decision — subjectively — by virtue of the baptism which they have received?

If one joins the strong assertion at Willingen and Evanston regarding the church's "not-yet" to the view of the church's confrontation of the world, one declares, as it were, that this confrontation also involves a confrontation of the world *in the church*. Readiness to disregard this fact inevitably implies an absolutizing of the church (in its scattered and therefore pluralistic form). Evangelism dies; missions directly and obviously end in failure. Above all, the church undergoes petrification from within. The movement of the church through the history of the world and therefore through the history of the people belonging to the church is essentially a missionary

movement because the religious and even Christian disguise of godless man is always before the church; but when the church hardens from within, it ceases to be the itinerant people of God. Instead, by pressing for an objective token of affiliation, by appealing in a matter-of-fact and obstinate fashion to its "baptized state," the church itself assumes the disguise worn by godless man. In the ecumenical discussion on evangelism it is realized, though unexpressed, that Jesus Christ can be pharisaically and legalistically hampered in his work of bringing the members of the church to turn when the church refers baptism to the "people in the church" but not to the "pagans in Africa." This realization includes the question how current churches and groups understand the message, which, as an eschatological message, of itself and through its own freedom always shapes the situation initially. The task of the Western churches within their immediate, given environment must be grasped as a missionary task, and its execution must be demanded as such. In the ecumenical discussion the theologically weightiest elements behind this conception of the Western churches' task consist in the confrontation of the world by the church, the church's essential discontinuity with the world, the new respect accorded baptism (*metanoia*), the pointed allusion to the world in the church, and the concern for the church being truly church.

Independently of the discussion connected with the World Council, M. A. C. Warren has formulated the point of the foregoing as follows:

There is no country which is not a mission-field. Everywhere the Christian must seek to prepare for the coming Kingdom. His responsibility is the same whether in central London or in central Africa. . . . Everywhere he is a foreigner. . . . He propagates another kind of life. He prepares for a new order. . . . Until the Church rediscovers this truth it will not be a demonstration of its Gospel in the contemporary world.⁵³

⁵³ Warren, *The Truth of the Vision*, pp. 137-38.

The one world

In the ecumenical discussion the view of the churches as directly confronting the world has been generally accepted. With regard to the missionary function appropriate to the churches, this view has led to something that has become a commonplace in the sociology of culture: every part of the world is sporadically undergoing an immense, revolutionary upheaval. Seen on the whole, the peculiar historical significance of the individual spheres of the world is constantly diminishing. For the churches this entails the potential proximity of a workers' congregation in east London to one in East London, South Africa. This aspect has scarcely been realized, if at all, as of the present time. In consideration of the real "ferment of change transforming the life of East and West,"⁵⁴ the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram mentioned nationalism, communism, and scientific scepticism⁵⁵ as well as the non-Christian religions as movements of primary importance in Asia and Africa due to their world-wide power. R. B. Manikam has clearly shown that "the unchanging East changes"⁵⁶ in the book he edited on the Asian revolution⁵⁷ in his capacity as the Secretary for East Asia of the International Missionary Council and the World Council. In the ecumenical survey on India a few factors were presented which apply beyond India and Asia to Africa also:

The Church faces a new India, a modernized India, a country rapidly becoming industrialized. . . . In spite of the fact that India is still mainly an agricultural country, our way of life, at all levels, is being

⁵⁴ "The Witness of the Church in Relation to the Non-Christian Religions, the new Paganisms and the Cultural Heritage of the Nations," in *The Authority of the Faith*, p. 203.

⁵⁵ "Findings of Section I," in *Authority of the Faith*, pp. 194 ff.

⁵⁶ V. E. Devadutt, "The Unchanging East Changes," *Theology Today*, XIII (1956), 30-36.

⁵⁷ *Christianity and the Asian Revolution*, ed. R. B. Manikam (Madras: Joint East Asia Secretariat, IMC and WCC, 1954).

rapidly modified by the onslaught of a technical civilization and introduction everywhere of the factory. "A new type of man torn from his ancient roots, ready to become a mass-man" and part of a vast machine is being produced.

More serious still is the *secularization of the intellectual*, which frequently draws him away from the church. This estrangement is characterized by *individuality*, and by *independence* of the sources of Christian spiritual and moral life. "I do not intend to teach Christian doctrines to my children. When they grow up they can decide for themselves what they wish to believe." This attitude of a Christian doctor has other aspects. "All religions are good. Why should we consider Christianity superior?" Indifference, syncretism and independence describe this growing *secular fringe of Christianity*.⁵⁸

H. Kraemer commented on this state of affairs:

We have grown into a close and fatefully interrelated world-unity and have passed from static stability into a universally revolutionary situation. Primitive tribes, ancient oriental civilizations and societies, the modern Western world in all its parts and aspects, are at present living through crucial conflicts. . . . Everywhere the unity of life is shattered to the core because of the collapse of old certitudes and the throwing away of old bondages. . . . The universal disintegration of society and its ensuing demoralization releases everywhere demonic forces. . . .⁵⁹

The renaissance of the non-Christian religions only seems to oppose this development. The crucial characteristic of this situation is not a reciprocal exclusion of Westernization (secularization, levelling, etc.) and revival of essentially materialistically oriented world religions. The decisive mark is rather a synthetic combination drawing upon several areas. The resulting religions not only dynamically open the East to the West, but to an even greater extent progressively incorporate the East in their evolution.

W. Freytag in particular has pointed out that a new *universal religion* is coming into being. It can be seen and recognized specifically as a point of departure, as a facet of a widespread mood; but it is astir everywhere and is breaking upon

⁵⁸ *Evangelism in India*, pp. 24, 41-42.

⁵⁹ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 15.

the scene in many places. It syncretistically adopts specific and not unimportant features of Christianity and enables old religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Shinto to develop into a post-Christian cultural force:

Despite all self-consciousness, . . . a remarkable assimilative process is under way. Wherever this new orientation is proclaimed, the same vocabulary is employed. Peace, freedom, tolerance, social justice are typical key words. They are not just catchwords of morality through which an appeal is made to men receptive to gods preached to them. These words themselves are the actual goal. They possess a *messianic* ring and constitute a future which promises men a better life and everything included in it, a respectable standard of living, security, freedom from need, and a new and real political life.⁶⁰

Here are "thoughts, ideals, and catchwords which cannot be conceived as originating apart from Christianity and the Christian message, but which have become detached from the Christian message." The tension between a regard for the West and a regard for one's own environment press them into a new mold, and now they spread, let us say, "like the social currents in new Buddhism."⁶¹

These same ideas and even the very same vocabulary of propaganda exercise their power not only in the operational areas of the old religions but also throughout the reaches of Asia, in which new, secular religions have enfeebled and repressed the old religions. Awareness of this fact gives the impression that *some sort of world religion* has been formed which overlaps religions and anti-religions. Against the common backdrop of this world religion, its differences are not more than confessional peculiarities within the same religion, the *world religion of worldly gods*.⁶²

Through such recasting of religion, Hinduism develops its universality (Radhakrishnan), Buddhism becomes conscious of its commission ultimately to bring peace to the world

⁶⁰ W. Freytag, "Nach Ghana: Neue Aspekte der Weltmission," in *Christus in Fernost, Mitteilungen, DOAM*, 1958 (April/June), p. 5 (my italics); also, *Theology for Evangelism*, ¶ 6.

⁶¹ W. Freytag, "Der Islam als Beispiel einer nachchristlicher Religion," *Evangelische Missionszeitschrift*, XII (1955), p. 102.

⁶² W. Freytag, "Nach Ghana . . ." in *Christus in Fernost*, p. 5 (my italics).

(Sixth Buddhist Council, Rangoon, 1954), Shinto is able to develop a modern political ethic, and new religions such as Baha'i which are at bottom syncretistic receive a sense of missionary responsibility. But the essentially post-Christian character of these religions is of real moment here. That is what makes this phenomenon an expression of the one world emerging from its various areas and its historical configurations. In this post-Christian element the Christian message seems to have suffered defeat: "They pride themselves on being more Christian than the Christians, but without Christ. And this creates an immunity to Christ."⁶³

The social structures which have undergone alteration or are currently "in sudden upheaval" in Asia and Africa of course constitute an important sociological element; and in these changing structures there can first be seen a sign of the increasing standardization of the world. But this sociological element is far surpassed by another. Despite all sorts of half-expressed utterances and concomitant "cultural lags," there is a striking trend which bears a substantial identity with a trend initiated in the West two hundred years ago. This similarity must not be overlooked:

[Essentially this is] the perennial question, "Where in the religions of the world are moral power, harmony with science, promotion of equality, freedom, brotherhood, and struggle against poverty?" Obviously this is not a matter just of moral values, but of social equality, the ample life, and ideal political existence. These are the criteria by which the religions must prove themselves. Everything has been subordinated to belief in man's effecting a messianic future.⁶⁴

W. Freytag can therefore write: "We have learned not to think in terms of spheres, whether Christian or non-Christian, and have now realized that evangelism is the task of the Church at home and abroad."⁶⁵

⁶³ Freytag, "Der Islam als Beispiel . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁶⁴ Freytag, "Nach Ghana . . ." in *Christus in Fernost*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ W. Freytag, *Die neue Stunde der Weltmission* (Stuttgart: Evangelischer Missionsverlag, 1952), p. 20.

The one task

The preceding quotation continues: "It is now seen that even in Scripture no fundamental distinction is drawn between the Church's proclamation at home and abroad."⁶⁶

Elsewhere W. Freytag substantiates this statement:

The Kingdom of God is universal and the expectancy of the final End includes the whole world. The community which waits for the Lord cannot preserve its essential nature if it remains enclosed within the confines of one nation and does not take part, by work and prayer, in proclaiming the Gospel among all nations. If this fact is not grasped, then the task among the dechristianized masses in the lands of the older churches cannot be rightly accomplished either. Restriction to a particular sphere always involves the danger of remaining immobilized at a penultimate stage, of wanting well-attended and powerful churches instead of going forward to meet the Lord.⁶⁷

Similarly, M. A. C. Warren writes: "Paralysis in the evangelistic task within its own nation awaits as a certain doom the church which does not carry the Gospel to the world. This is one world."⁶⁸

Reference to what was said on the one church in the introduction to this section makes it necessary to add at this point only that the "base" for the churches' task cannot really be the territory which the churches have already practically saturated with the message. The "base" must instead be *the whole world*. Only on this basis are the situations cognizable in their full depth. In Europe, America, and Australia, as has already been seen in detail, the same course must be taken in the "total task of winning the whole world for Christ."⁶⁹ In this way alone will the church become true and free and powerful.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ W. Freytag, "The Meaning and Purpose of the Christian Mission," *International Review of Missions*, XXXIX (1950), 161.

⁶⁸ Warren, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 400; likewise, D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life*, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁹ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 216.

SECULARISM AS THE PROCESS OF ABROGATING THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST: THE NEW REALITY

In Part II the question of the situation in the West was discussed chiefly from a sociological aspect. Now the question must be seen from a theological viewpoint. An attempt will be made to spell out fully what was suggested in the preceding section.

The tension which will be noticed in the following is that between the historical view and the kerygmatic view of the situation. Because of the character of the Word, this tension can be resolved only within existing conditions in terms of a kerygmatic appraisal. To a great extent the tension therefore eludes any attempt to make it completely demonstrable empirically.

Secularism is the decisive fact in the secularizing process which has been largely brought to its conclusion in the West but has been violently inaugurated in the East through avid acceptance of elements of Western civilization. In secularism the secularization of the world which the Gospel allows is perverted. The world becomes the locus of man's active disjunction from God in Jesus Christ. The freedom given by God for facing the assaults of nature is turned against God himself. At Evanston E. Schlink said:

[Man] has been liberated from the bonds of this world and from domination by gods and demons. But he has torn freedom loose from submission to Christ. He is taking it upon himself to create the eternal kingdom of peace and is no longer waiting for Christ's coming.⁷⁰

The unresponsiveness which we have noted as characteristic of the situation is simply the perfection in practice of the secularism which has been widely consummated among contemporary Western men. There is no longer any offensive

⁷⁰ E. Schlink, "Christus—die Hoffnung fuer die Welt," in *Christus—die Hoffnung der Welt*, ed. H. Grueber and G. Brennecke, p. 45.

or defensive; there is only an ultimate uncomprehension of how God can possibly address men in Jesus Christ at all. Only stolid *indifference* remains.

Secularism has developed systems which have given rise to the question whether they are not religions. Even if this question were to be answered in the negative, the systems still possess a characteristic which W. Freytag has labeled theological. In these systems men "live in the presence of God strictly by what they recognize as good."⁷¹ Nothing makes this fact more obvious than the secularism within secularization.

The tradition of the Christian community

Before this statement can be amplified, some reference must be made to the historical singularity of those areas in the one world upon which Christianity has left its mark. That reference both can and must stress that, following ascertainment of the essentially homogeneous condition of the situation, distinctions must be drawn within it.

Every examination of the situation in Europe, North America,⁷² and Australia shows that the situation there is marked by a thousand years of preaching the gospel (Europe) or an intensive penetration by the Word over a period of centuries (North America, Australia). A number of phenomena indicate that the West, despite its secularistic progressiveness, is not to be treated as a clearly non-Christian area: surprisingly extensive participation in religious education or Sunday schools; the largely unabated assumption that baptism is desirable for children and the unquestioned acceptance of attending confirmation classes; the call for a minister at burials; the decline in the proportion of withdrawals from the churches; the strongly increasing trend in the United States towards church membership; the dis-

⁷¹ Freytag, "Nach Ghana . . .," in *Christus in Fernost*, p. 5.

⁷² Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Situation in the U.S.A.," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, III, 80-82.

crimination in ethical questions, often of surprising reliability, practiced by individuals as well as by entire groups of the population on the basis of Christian principles; the outcry which has recently been raised in wide circles, e.g., Great Britain, Scandinavia, Holland, and Germany, for the church to come to a decision on the question of atomic armament; and even the mere presence of the church in the world community, the existence of steeples, church bells, and even church functionaries. In the face of the social character of the West as marked by Christianity, talk of the "dechristinized West" without further comment is incorrect. It may be that the West has been carelessly judged on the basis of the medieval *Corpus Christianum* ideal and of clerical regrets that the *Corpus Christianum* has been shattered. It may be that this was inspired by a wish for a repristination of the churches' public hegemony. S. C. Neill may therefore well write the following — and so make clear the distance of the West from the East:

Only those who have lived long in a country which has never been Christian can appreciate the extent to which the Church was successful in imposing on Christendom the Christian pattern of living, and how even in lands where secularization has gone furthest, the mind of a Western man still moves within the Christian categories and Christian framework of thought.⁷³

Even J. C. Hoekendijk, whose bold hand elsewhere dismisses all too readily the significance of tradition, agrees with this evaluation of the state of affairs on the basis of history. Indeed, he gives it even greater depth from the aspect of the history of salvation and the unparalleled, indissoluble import of the gospel and its historical effect. He does so by stressing that "strictly speaking," i.e., in terms of the future coming of Christ, there can be "no 'post-Christian' era." His point is empirically demonstrated in that it is impossible to speak accurately of a " 'post-biblical' era."

⁷³ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 74.

In the years marked A.D. nobody succeeds in being un-biblical. Everywhere he will meet fragments of biblical ideas, even when these ideas are integrated in a system where they are arrayed against the total biblical message. The real marxist, for example, lives from social prophecy and stands perhaps closer to Amos and Micah than he himself, or his opponents, are willing to acknowledge. Our contemporary utopists try to interpret old messianic desires for the Kingdom of God. The nihilist lives—as Berdyaev so often reminded us—by the misunderstood first half of that old Christian prayer “May this world perish” (and Thy Kingdom come). And in spite of all its care to secure religious neutrality, UNO is based on an ideology in which different biblical ideas are presupposed.⁷⁴

Against the background of the Asian and African cultures, the classical missionary situation, the situation of the West does not appear, and rightly so, to be simply “pagan.” In fact, J. C. Hoekendijk’s article manifests the preclusion of any notion that history is returning to paganism.

A thorough perusal of the article would make it conspicuous to the reader, certainly in the vocabulary utilized, that the article refers to the *historical* difference in the West and is chiefly concerned with its *social* condition. T. O. Wedel writes of “social blessing,” “standards,” “tradition,” “social inheritance,” “moral conscience,” “Christian grace in our communal scene.”⁷⁵ Here is an analysis of the situation with regard to surviving Christian convictions, viz., with regard to the continued effect of principles created by Christianity for the purpose of shaping life. The analysis presents an important partial aspect of the current state of affairs, which from this aspect assumes a positive appearance; but it is only a historical aspect.

How much weight does this aspect carry? If its theological validity is taken seriously to the degree required by the historical reality of the churches, then it will be necessary to agree with S. C. Neill and J. C. Hoekendijk. Theological dis-

⁷⁴ J. C. Hoekendijk, “Thinking Biblically and Biblical Thinking,” *The Student World*, XLII (1949), 143.

⁷⁵ T. O. Wedel, *The Christianity of Main Street* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 26.

tion must be made between a pre-Christian and post-Christian situation. This aspect first of all signifies that history, once Jesus Christ entered it, now differs in some sense from what it was before he entered it. The radical change effected by the preaching of the gospel has occasioned man's emancipation from being "frightened to death" and so has caused a social (cultural) configuration which fundamentally differs internally from the preceding one. This configuration is so tenacious in essence that it outlasts earnest confession of Christ or, should it suffer infringement, re-establishes itself, although with certain qualifications. (The latter course was taken by the socialists and liberals in the German resistance movement.) This historical condition is incontestable in the West and must be repeatedly emphasized. The distinction, however, between a pre- and post-Christian situation also contains another component which is no less substantial. Every decision about Christ is theologically either a decision for him or against him. Never again will it be possible to ignore Christ.

This second attribute of the distinction, accentuated as it is in the discussion, does not weaken the first attribute, but rather deepens it. The situation after Christ, be it ever so Christian, obviously conceals a much greater danger than the pre-Christian situation, i.e., rejection of Christ (which is difficult to recognize by any outward signs). This is the crux of the problem and the main stress in the discussion.

The 'No' to Christ after Christ

J. C. Hoekendijk's reference to the biblical features imbedded in the ideology of the United Nations involves the problem of understanding that ideology. Neither the Charter of the United Nations nor its Declaration of Human Rights, which is very important in the present connection, is conceivable apart from the radical change which occurred with Christ, the pervasive penetration of the gospel throughout

the West, and the influence on the East of the teachings of freedom. The Charter and Declaration show that the political order of the world and the guarantee of individual freedom have been essentially stamped by Christianity, but have been formulated without reference to Christ. They lack not only the Sermon on the Mount as a question directed to every human activity and as a reference to the limits of the possible; they also lack — explicit mention cannot be presupposed — some indication that peace and freedom, as they are conceived in Christianity, can only be apprehended through illumination by the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These omissions are thrown into sharper relief theologically by the fact that the United Nations, resuming the role of the League of Nations, has grown out of the tradition of Western, Christian society. The ideology of the United Nations offers a prototype of a way of life based on a Christian heritage and on universally acknowledged Christian principle — but without Christ. And, theologically, to live without Christ means to live in opposition to Christ. The United Nations does not regard itself solely as a supreme political instrument and confine itself to such a function. Instead, for the sake of its effectiveness in the world (an indication that “world” always has religious connotations), it has had to develop an ideology which, as every state does, it has anchored metaphysically. Such a procedure clearly shows that the United Nations has been emancipated from exclusive dependence on the God who became man in Jesus Christ and decreed all “powers” to be under himself (Col. 1:16). When the *skandalon* of the cross and resurrection is eliminated, God’s saving activity for all nations is radically secularized. *Man* and his *welfare* become the focus and Christianity becomes “Christian-ness,” i.e., Christ is forgotten in the Christian orientation. The United Nations and all the powers which shape and support their ideologies by the tradition of the Christian community constitute a sweeping expression of the basic, post-Christian

posture taken by an undoubtedly non-pagan Western society. To be unwilling to consider this state of affairs because a clear-cut dichotomy between temporal and spiritual action is envisaged is only to misunderstand human arbitrariness and its necessary consequence, a self-determination which always acquires religious connotations.⁷⁶

Outside of the ecumenical discussion on evangelism but in indirect connection with the ecumenical study, "The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men," W. Freytag has set forth the problem of post-Christian religious movements and pointed to features in *Islam* which illustrate the meaning of "post-Christian" most clearly.⁷⁷ We refer to it here in order to make the problem fruitful for the ecumenical discussion on evangelism.

The problem consists in the emergence of Islam as the religion of the prophet, Muhammed, in which the religion of the "prophet" Jesus is surpassed. W. Freytag points to the characteristic fact that Muslim chronology does not reckon from Muhammed's call in 610, but from the Hegira in 622. At that time in Medina, Muhammed received "a more thorough knowledge of Judaism and Christianity": "Now he encounters witness to Jesus as the Son of God. Now he faces the decision: Which is valid, the message of the gospel, a book, or his own prophetic calling? He decides in favor of the latter . . ." ⁷⁸ The decision in favor of oneself is the classic decision against Christ, which is made after his coming and, thus, in confrontation with him. This decision implies the collection of Old Testament and New Testament material which, fragmentary as this might have been, came to Muhammed before Medina and which served as a point of departure for his life. It implies the elimination of the cross and resur-

⁷⁶ Cf. "International Affairs: Christians in the Struggle for World Community," in *The Evanston Report*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft.

⁷⁷ W. Freytag, "Der Islam als Beispiel . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 97-104; cf., J. C. Hoekendijk, "Het apostolaat in Europa in het licht van enkele ervaringen van de Islam-zending," *Nederlandse Theologisch Tijdschrift*, VII (1952), 321-31.

⁷⁸ Freytag, "Der Islam als Beispiel . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 100.

rection, which in a crudely rationalistic manner are proclaimed incredible. Jesus Christ is declared to be a "prophet" who possessed validity for his time but whose significance now is merely that he pointed to the present (i.e., Muhammed) and confirmed it by his teachings. The decision against Christ consists in *surpassing* him. Thus subordinated and excelled, Christ is fitted into a system and awarded a position which may well be a venerable one but which in the last analysis does not involve full commitment. Christ is withdrawn from faith. He enters tradition; only there is he of value. To call a Muslim to decide for Christ is the same as asking a Christian if he does not want to become a Jew.

In this development W. Freytag gives prominence to four elements generally typical of post-Christian religion:

- 1) "The first is the remarkably basic feature of human self-assertion. Pascal described Islam as the best and most eminent example . . . of human self-assertion and the desire not to abandon oneself. Man is at the center of Islam." The consequence is "the self-assertion of the group, . . . of the believer. The group as such makes itself absolute."
- 2) "A kingdom begins to emerge which is divinely guaranteed for this world. God recedes into the background."
- 3) The result is "the remarkable way in which this post-Christian religion, as it confronts Christianity, adapts and enriches itself."
- 4) "The total . . . creates immunity to the message of Christ. For to be after and beyond Christ is obviously the same as being against him. It is typical of post-Christian religion that its prime religious principle consists in a consciousness of superiority."⁷⁹

In these four elements, which of course vary widely in details, the problem of the post-Christian orientation of the

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

West (and, as has been seen, also of Asia and Africa to some extent) is sharply crystallized. Man asserts himself by eliminating the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ; he creates a kingdom of this world which is, to be sure, connected with God but which belongs to man; he resorts to the Christian material and carefully preserves it; and consequently he establishes his superiority over the temptation experienced under the message. By means of the four elements described above we may note in what light these self-assertive acts of man will have to be observed. The open and devoted "Yes" to God in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ is lacking. The missing "Yes" is constantly a "No" which potentially always tends and presses toward an independent post-Christian religion.

The medieval church reacted to the emergence and growth of Islam in such a way that it did not recognize Islam as a religion in its own right until a millenium after it began. Consideration of this fact leads to the question whether the ideology of secularism does not have to be countered today as if it were a religion. This is the question in the ecumenical discussion, in which — as elsewhere, so here — a problem has emerged for which precise, scientific definition is still lacking.

The point is, in any event, immunity to Christ. For it is not simply a matter of subtracting Christ in the course of this "calculation." If this is done, his place is always taken by something else that possesses religious quality and, even if slowly, makes its religious quality felt. Whenever this occurs, a call to return is not to the point. The point is rather a *new* call to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The non-Christian hopes

The ecumenical discussion reached an awareness of the secularistic movements in 1928 at Jerusalem. Afterwards, since Oxford (1937) and Tambaram (1938), the discussion has become ever more cognizant of the way in which the

place occupied by Jesus Christ in the biblical message has been supplanted by human ideologies.

The catchwords, "secular faiths," "anti-gospels," "pseudo-religions," were taken from Amsterdam to describe those movements, attitudes, and systems which were formed as substitutes for the Christian gospel after alienation from the Christian Church. Today they offer their services in every alienation from the church: "scientific humanism" "the democratic faith," "socialism," "nationalism," and "nihilism."⁸⁰ At the end of the Report of the Advisory Commission, the following are mentioned as representative hopes of our time: "democratic humanism," "scientific humanism," "Marxism," "national and religious renaissance," and "the hope of the hopeless" (atheistic existentialism).⁸¹ W. Pauck (as the speaker for an ecumenical study group in Chicago) stresses the religious character peculiar to these hopes; the Report of the Advisory Commission regards them as confronting the hope in Christ. Through that hope these hopes, from which the movements mentioned above draw their life, become fraught with meaning. It is precisely this last remark which reveals how thoroughly one is deceived if one sees only that side of these movements which faces the Christian message. They are autonomous. "Many are anxious. Some are despairing. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that most men are without hope."⁸² This hope is hope in man!

In the order of the Report of the Advisory Commission, the following are mentioned in detail:

1) Democratic humanism, which originated in Christian society and draws its nourishment from that source, lives in the main on the statement that "man is master of his own destiny." In pursuance of this belief a barren form of self-

⁸⁰ W. Pauck, "Rival Secular Faiths," in *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 38-52.

⁸¹ *Report of the Advisory Commission on the Main Theme of the Second Assembly* ¶¶ 71 ff.

⁸² *Ibid.*, ¶ 71.

government is ideologically provided with a metaphysical foundation which leads to "faith in the capacity of education or technology to solve all human problems," i.e., to "belief in inevitable progress":⁸³ "It is a faith in the capacity of men through intelligence and good will to relate themselves to one another in search for a co-operative solution of their common problems."⁸⁴ This faith involves "above all disregard or denial of God's sovereign lordship over the world" and "becomes a Christian heresy whenever it pretends to be Christian."⁸⁵

2) Scientific humanism also centers "all hopes on man"⁸⁶ by claiming "that at length men will overcome all those frustrations which have dogged their search for happiness."⁸⁷ If scientific humanism is to be ideologically true to itself, as it is to a great degree, then it "must reject the Christian faith as an enemy."⁸⁸

3) The Marxist hope consists in the secularization and total negation of the Christian hope.⁸⁹

4) "The hope of the hopeless," fashioned from the subjective collapse of hopes in general, including the Christian hope, develops with desperate courage "the most honest of all forms of anthropocentrism." This hope is that man, amid all the absurdity surrounding him, will be able to "create [such] meaning and value himself"⁹⁰ as can be given him by no one other than himself. The Christian hope is precluded.

It is necessary to recur directly and systematically to the traditional history of religions. On this basis it is hardly pos-

⁸³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 76.

⁸⁴ W. Pauck, "Rival Secular Faiths," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 42-43.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 76.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ¶ 82.

⁸⁷ Pauck, "Rival Secular Faiths," *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 39.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Advisory Commission . . .*, ¶ 82.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ¶¶ 86 ff.; the question of nationalistic and religious renaissance has already been mentioned.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ¶ 106.

sible to designate the movements mentioned above as religions and to set them on a par with the historic religions of Asia and Africa. It is also extremely questionable from considerations prompted by the phenomenology of religion — Bolshevik Marxism-Leninism is probably an exception — whether it is permissible to speak of religion with respect to these movements. In general, they lack the “form” and [cultic] institution of religions. But W. Pauck does not intend to make this sort of claim. Instead his statements tend to bring to light the genuinely religious element in such movements. This element is manifested in the modes of secularism referred to above and is to be found precisely where these modes of secularism are most plainly and decisively detached from the Christian message, viz., at its center, Jesus Christ.

The crux of the matter is that faith in man has created a system in which it has anchored itself. This is the new factor which fundamentally alters the relationship of natural man to the message of the cross and resurrection. The unbeliever is no longer exposed freely and without protection, as it were, to the exhortation and demand of the gospel, as was the case in the *Corpus Christianum*. Rather, like the men in the world religions, he is embraced in a *system* to which he has recourse when he encounters the demand. What is more, he is embraced by a system which originates from the “No” to Christ and in which the “No” manifests a presumed *superiority* to Christ and Christians. Within the system at its religious center, he is immune. In this sense he is not merely opposed and alien to the biblical message and the churches. He excludes them both—as non-Christian! His self-understanding is an “anti-gospel.”

The hope offered in the various forms of secularism makes the character of the “anti-gospel” plain. It is due to the Advisory Commission that this fact has been ascertained in the discussion on evangelism. The complete contrariety and mutual exclusiveness which separates the secularistic hopes

from hope in the returning Lord comes to light in the "non-Christian hope."⁹¹ The opposition becomes clear and indelible when these hopes harden ideologically, when it is not a matter of "legitimate earthly hopes" which "only in utter reliance upon God and obedience to Him can be truly discovered and rightly held,"⁹² and when *absolutes* by which life can be and is lived are therefore at stake. The antithesis lies in the *future*: man or Christ. This is essentially a religious antithesis. It is quite evident in the emergence and development of Islam in opposition to the Christian message. Precisely to the extent that the world religions are recast commensurately with their own nature into religions for the new masses, the antithesis is experienced when they are confronted by proclamation of the cross, resurrection, and final lordship of Christ.

This antithesis is doubtlessly strongest in Marxism, in which the hope is very strictly systematized and militantly expressed. In contrast, the hopes of democratic and scientific humanism appear to be weaker and therefore less exclusive. In them, however, the same antithesis is in fact effected in a quieter and, so to speak, more conciliatory manner—but is not fully recognized where the uniqueness and ultimate exclusiveness of hope in the Lord who has come and is coming again is not completely grasped theologically or existentially. If the position is taken that, under the message, there can be no hope other than hope in Christ without denial of Christ, then it is evident how utterly the western "anti-gospels" have constrained men within traditional Christian society to oppose Christ, although this never becomes demonstrable. In connection with this idea, S. C. Neill writes:

Nominal Christianity itself is a non-Christian or even anti-Christian system. It is a total way of living which is centered in man and not in God, and therefore is not subject to the will of God, neither indeed

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ¶ 108.

⁹² *Ibid.*, ¶ 78.

can be, all the more dangerous because a measure of conformity to Christian ethical standards may conceal the basic difference between such a position and the reality of Christian faith.⁹³

The gap between Christ and men, baptized or not, who are enveloped in secularism, is evidenced by these men's *hopes*. At this point the unity of missions and evangelism is given most emphatic expression in the ecumenical discussion through reference to the New Testament call for *repentance*, which applies to "all nations" (Luke 24:47) as well as to the congregation (Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 7:10). Missions and evangelism are held in unity, as is apparent in the contemporaneous situation, through the concept *metanoia*. This is a *kerygmatic unity*!

The baptized individual within secularism

The new reality: Man has remained man, though living by the gift of God received in baptism. But he does not live in the *paganismus invisibilis* familiar throughout the history of the church, neither in the sense of "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) nor in the sense of the sinner who is in fact always in the process of justification. Instead, man lives within a metaphysical and ideological understanding of himself which is undisputed, open, conscious of its superiority, and even systematic and doctrinaire. In such a context baptism is secularized without becoming inoperative.

The assertion that such baptism remains baptism is always made in the face of opposition from a substantial current within the ecumenical discussion. But could not such opposition lead to disregard of the new reality, in which innumerable baptized individuals methodically secularize baptism? Would it mean — the critical point in the discussion — that the gospel must be brought to them as it is to the pagans in Asia and Africa who are caught in the world religions? Must

⁹³ *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, II, 117–18.

not the gospel be brought to them as the proclamation of the lordship of God to those who have never heard it in repentance?

In the ecumenical discussion the statement that the West is a missionary field is rooted in this notion of the individual's imprisonment in systematic secularism. Hope bypassing Christ—and therefore against Christ—will always remain hope beyond Christ. This is the reality in the classical missionary field as well as the new reality in the West.

Is it possible, then, to call men *back* to baptism by alluding to their baptism? Is it simply a question of evangelistic programs? The explicit statements of the ecumenical discussion bring the inquiry only to this point.

EVANGELISM FOR THE BAPTIZED (BAPTISM AND KNOWLEDGE)

In anticipation of the question now raised, a number of matters have already been mentioned. The necessity of examining this question theologically under the criterion of baptism was expressed. Further, it was said this necessity derived from the fact that, on the basis of the missionary mandate as a mandate to baptize, the missionary category has a fixed theological boundary, i.e., it must entail baptism. It was also stated that an important qualification befits this position when recognition is accorded to both the unifying function of the concept *metanoia* and the new way of formulating the question in connection with the state of the missionary situation. In short, can discourse about evangelism be properly theological discourse if evangelism is directed to men who have already been baptized?

In attempting to indicate a solution to the question, we shall initially summarize constructively the most important point of departure in the discussion. This consists in an observation, which can of course be refined in its detail, concerning the vast majority of men and especially those living in Europe. In spite of their baptism, which seals them to membership

in the body of Christ, they do not live within membership in the church; they do not hear the Word proclaimed by the church; and they do not seek the Lord's Supper as an event and pledge of forgiveness and new life in Christ. The a-Christian milieu has been discovered to be a visible manifestation of the generally a-Christian or post-Christian atmosphere. Accordingly, it has been asserted that the men of this milieu, quite apart from those who have not been baptized, have never truly been members of the church. Indeed, aside from their baptism and a superficial instruction which was inadequate to cope with secularistic envelopment, they had only the slightest contact with the church. Even if there has been some contact, it has been primarily social and extremely strained. To be sure, this expressly a-Christian milieu is limited by reason of its sociological preciseness; but its manifestations, which appear within it in concentration, are daily displayed through their general import. In spite of all the intensified public activity of the churches, the progress of these manifestations must not be overlooked. The most important phenomenon in this expansive milieu is not emancipation from the common Christian orientation; but rather, following the widespread completion of such emancipation, utter disjunction from the message. Nothing is known of the heart of the message, the lordship of Jesus Christ. Indeed, among the young even the name of Jesus Christ is widely unknown! Till now such *ignorance* has gone unrecognized for the most part because it is found outside of the churches' area of worship and pastoral care; but this ignorance is the characteristic feature of the new reality. It is small wonder that evangelization and evangelistic programs have by and large foundered amid such a situation. Their aim was to realize baptism and so-called childlike faith through conversion or, somewhat more cautiously, through bringing men to turn, viz., to return, to the church and its worship services. Essentially it was and had to be a call to return. This was

already evident from the fact that the call, with but few exceptions, was verbal, and even the exceptions were mostly stamped by the milieu of home missions. It was a call from the church to the unchurched. This call assumed that it would be understood even if it should have to be expressed in the most external manner. Even if surreptitiously, recollection was always used as the groundwork. Recollection was to be decisively aroused and made the "point of contact" for response to the proclamation. The intention was to appeal to baptism because it was presumed still to be a binding force, even if ever so weak, upon those who confronted the proclamation. But men were too thoroughly imbued with the new reality! At many specific points the result was quite plain. There was nothing left to build on, to make contact with, or to recollect. It was either never there, or it perished amid variety or in any case amid a system of secularism. As has already been stated, the sacrament actually exists here apart from the Word!

The task is called proclamation of the Word in the sense that the Word must be proclaimed first, and that means for the first time. Wherever the Word has never been heard or has been accepted when mentioned only in passing (as is the case in the classical missionary situation), it is first necessary to bear witness to it. This act of initial testimony is a missionary act. Consequently, by reason of the absence of the Word, the issue is not a call to return to the validity of baptism, inherent in the mysteries of God, but rather a call to move forward. For what God has already done must first be heard. If the problem were clear-cut apostasy, then the call would be back to faith and so back to baptism. But if the problem is a new reality the call can only be forward *to baptism* in order that what has happened may happen! This call is not a call to hear anew, but to hear for the first time, also of baptism and its seal. In other words, if the fact of secularized baptism exists, then *missionary* proclamation (evan-

gelism) is called for inasmuch as the Word, which is still absent, is called for. The course leading to the new element of confrontation within the new reality can be traversed only through missions; the geographical component of missions has become a sociological component of evangelism in the West; and the churches can again become truly church only through missions, i.e., through a call to move forward to Christ even when confronted by the new reality. We have given sufficient attention to these three points as arguments of the discussion.

Does the preceding hold true before the criterion that baptism, however administered, is baptism and that such baptism makes pagans baptized men before God? Is not the distinction between the call back to baptism and the call to baptism an artificial one? Is this not straining the point?

The purpose in so persistently urging the counter-question is to point out, over against the arguments of the discussion, that an *antinomy* presents itself here. Baptism is administered, but fails to become effective in church membership. More precisely, the antinomy consists in the necessity of stressing both factors. The antinomy admits of resolution from the standpoint neither of "institution" nor of "event" without foreshortening an essential part of the actual condition. This fact must be seen in the discussion!

Missions and evangelism form a unity in missionary proclamation (evangelism); but, with regard to baptism, this unity is not to be taken as the pure identification of evangelism with missionary proclamation to foreign lands (foreign evangelism). On the contrary, it can only be a matter of *synchronizing* to a degree these two missionary activities in such a way that evangelism is subsumed within foreign evangelism. Their unity is thus a unity of gathering at the same time toward the same end. (It is best to speak of interdependence). At this point their unity ceases to be mere extra-congregational activity on the part of the church.

The line to such a formulation is clearly drawn in the eschatological call to repentance (Mark 1:15), which will not tolerate qualification. The theological interdependence of missions and evangelism therefore rests on the *missio Dei*.

3. THE CONCEPT OF MISSIONARY PROCLAMATION (EVANGELISM)

FOREIGN MISSIONS AS A THEOLOGICAL CORRECTIVE⁹⁴

The concept of evangelism is fundamentally misconstrued if cast within the framework of the widely held opinion that "evangelism" in the final analysis refers simply to any sort of evangelism or missionary enterprise. Quite the reverse, the concept draws its importance and even eminence solely from foreign missions carried to the ends of the earth and of time through baptism. In addition, the concept of evangelism continues to be bound to the classical missionary enterprise in the sense that the concept of evangelism is dependent on the classical missionary enterprise and has to be permeated by it. This conception of evangelism, first of all, resists the temptation to reduce "progressive" foreign missions to the general category of "the missionary." The distinctive feature of foreign missions is to proclaim the gospel where no church as yet exists, where the lordship of God has never yet — historically — been proclaimed, where *pagans* are the object of concern, where there has as yet been no gathering and there must now be, and where therefore the eschatological promise for all nations is obediently believed. W. Freytag explains:

It is impossible to speak and think of missions if God's plan is not kept in mind. This is the plan which embraces the entire world and achieves its goal only when the witnesses to the kingship of Christ have spread the message to the ends of the earth and when the end of history sets in.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ J. Jocz, " 'Foreign' Missions as a Theological Corrective," *International Review of Missions*, XXXV (1946), 256–62.

⁹⁵ Freytag, *Die neue Stunde der Weltmission*, p. 20.

W. A. Visser 't Hooft therefore says "that biblical theology will lead us to discover that 'foreign' mission has its own specific place in the calling of the Church."⁹⁶ In foreign missions "the history of God's dealings with humanity strides towards its goal."⁹⁷

Secondly, when the concept of evangelism is properly construed, another temptation is avoided, i.e., the temptation to absolve evangelism of its strict dependence on the whole world and to allow it to be dissipated in local affairs and entangled in hyperactivity in church matters while the eschatological element is smothered. In home missions this is the ever-present danger, and marks their limitation when they succumb to this danger. It is therefore said that evangelism must be understood only in ecumenical terms.

A church which works entirely in one nation may indeed be said to be involved in an ecumenical mission, but this statement is true only if that church carries on its work with a full consciousness of its dependence on, and its relation to, other churches in other nations. It must realize that its mission is to the whole world, and that while it may, because of limited resources, work only in one area, it can do so only because others are carrying on part of its work for it in other areas of the world.

The local mission has validity only when it is acknowledged as a part of the world mission. The national mission has validity only when it is kept in relation to the foreign mission. Consequently, any newly sensed call to proclaim the gospel to paganized home-lands, to secularized intellectuals or industrialized labourers, can be followed only with a deep sense of relation to, and dependence on, the mission to all other men in the world. The mission to a de-Christianized West can never be undertaken as a substitute for, but only as a supplement to, the mission to an un-Christianized East.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Mission of the Church," *Student World*, L (1957), p. 324.

⁹⁷ Freytag, *Die neue Stunde der Weltmission*, p. 21. M. A. C. Warren sets himself the task of precisely defining world mission and the concept of "missionary" in *The Christian Imperative* (New York: Scribner's, 1955), pp. 121 ff., and of appraising the history and merits of mission societies in *The Christian Mission* (London: S. C. M. Pr., 1953).

⁹⁸ C. W. Forman, "The Place of Foreign Missions in the Mission of the Church," *Student World*, L (1957), pp. 372-73.

Evangelism, because it belongs theologically to foreign missions, is therefore always subject to their theological corrective, which is demonstrated rudimentarily in their practical execution.⁹⁹

THE SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELISM

The term "evangelism" is always used in such a way as to imply both "to move forward" and "to be sent forth." It is impossible to be missionary within an established congregation. The missionary enterprise is possible only where no congregation exists. The concept of evangelism [missionary proclamation] in the West, then, depends on the designation of evangelism as the churches' proclamation in those very places into which the Word has not yet penetrated and in which even the presuppositions for the appearance and acceptance of the Word are not given.

In this respect the concept of evangelism is differentiated from the concept of pastoral proclamation in worship services, instruction, ministration, and even in ceremonies for specific occasions, because in pastoral proclamation men, however motivated, respond when called. Consequently, despite special pertinence to contemporaneous questions, preaching in a worship service, even when attended by other than the regular congregation, cannot be called evangelism. Preaching to the congregation is always a sermon, even if differing in the elaboration of its text and in the form of its utterance from the (bemoaned) usual sermons and is therefore heard by more men.

⁹⁹ An example of utter misunderstanding of the concept of missionary is offered in E. T. Perry, "Evangelism: A Type of Work or a Quality of Living?" *International Review of Missions*, XXII (1933), 63-68: "Direct evangelism . . . makes no fundamental distinction between Christian and Non-Christian, between church member and non-church member, between Asiatic and American. The missionary on furlough must be an evangelist among his own friends . . . just as much as in a foreign field." The reason: "Direct evangelism . . . will consist to a great degree in the sharing of one's own personal experiences of the difference Christ made in the practical problems of everyday life" (pp. 67-68).

In evangelism it is a matter of overcoming the boundary and gap, which are mostly sociological, between the churches and the new element of confrontation. The nature of evangelism is defined by its aim, i.e., to break in wherever a milieu has been formed which is alien to the churches or is pitted against them and which lacks even the slightest connection with the churches. A classical expression of this sort of milieu and a classical, new element of confrontation for evangelism is provided by the socialistic community of the East European countries, by the class-conscious groups of the proletariat (especially in France), and by the associations of a definite intelligentsia in Western cities. Through these elements the new frontiers of faith become manifest which exist more or less throughout the undulatory terrain of modern society. Evangelism addresses itself to these elements and, in doing so, is genuinely missionary. But the concept of evangelism is delimited accordingly.

Failure to observe this delimitation from time to time in the ecumenical discussion expresses a reality which bursts the delimitation itself, formulated as it is on the basis of the element of confrontation. The a-Christian milieu is always merely a "theater" for the much more complex new reality. As a phenomenon the a-Christian milieu only points to something which exists in close proximity to the churches, though assuming many different forms. The foregoing makes it obvious that the concept may not and cannot be applied rigidly. Yet the primacy of the sociological dimension must be regarded as holding true for the concept and for the whole matter.

ESCHATOLOGICAL MINISTRY

The association of evangelism with foreign missions insures an eschatological understanding of evangelism. Evangelism stands with this, and without it, fails as missionary proclamation.

If evangelism does not regard itself as an eschatological ministry, it will not, in the last analysis, gather on the strength of Jesus Christ and his coming, even though this be its intention. It will gather instead for the churches and their increase. If that happens, the concept of the missionary is abused and depleted. Of itself evangelism has no power.

If evangelism is not understood eschatologically, it will, in the last analysis, be merely an effort to shape attitudes and an attempt to establish contact, but nothing more. Such has been the death of many a worthy beginning in church work. Invitations and conversations are then regarded as missionary activities; behind them lies hazily, if at all, the goal of a change in authority for the elements confronting the gospel. The evangelistic undertaking remains a matter of approaches (important as these are initially).

If gathering with a view to the end is at stake, though, the message in evangelism will be concentrated on "regard for the end" and will always be a direct call to Christ and to obedience, which must be decided upon through the "Yes" to Christ as the sole hope. Inasmuch as evangelism betokens com-*passion* with Christ, it must simultaneously express a com-*passion* with the one to whom the message is addressed. And evangelism must act this way in patient solidarity with the addressees in their distress, distant though it be from Christ. For evangelism is *participation* in Christ's mission to the world! This applies universally. It means, in terms of the eschatological context of evangelism: *kerygma* and *diakonia* in *koinonia*.

DEFINITION

In view of the preceding elaborations, a definition¹⁰⁰ of evangelism would have to read as follows: Evangelism is the churches' participation in the messianic work of Jesus Christ. It is eschatological ministry to all men who have not as yet heard the gospel's call to repentance. In evangelism the churches live out their hope that Jesus Christ, with a view to his future, gathers men throughout the whole world for his congregation. More briefly: *Evangelism is hope in action.*

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. R. Mott (ed.), *Evangelism for the World Today* (New York: Harper, 1938). *Towards the Conversion of England*, Being the Report of a Commission on Evangelism appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Westminster, p. 1, offers the following definition: "To evangelise is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church." This definition has been adopted by the Madras Foreign Missions Council, the National Council of the Churches of Christ, and, among others, the Commission on Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

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